

Gen Z speaks up:

In the wake of El Paso, Gilroy and Dayton shootings, students stand together in calling for change

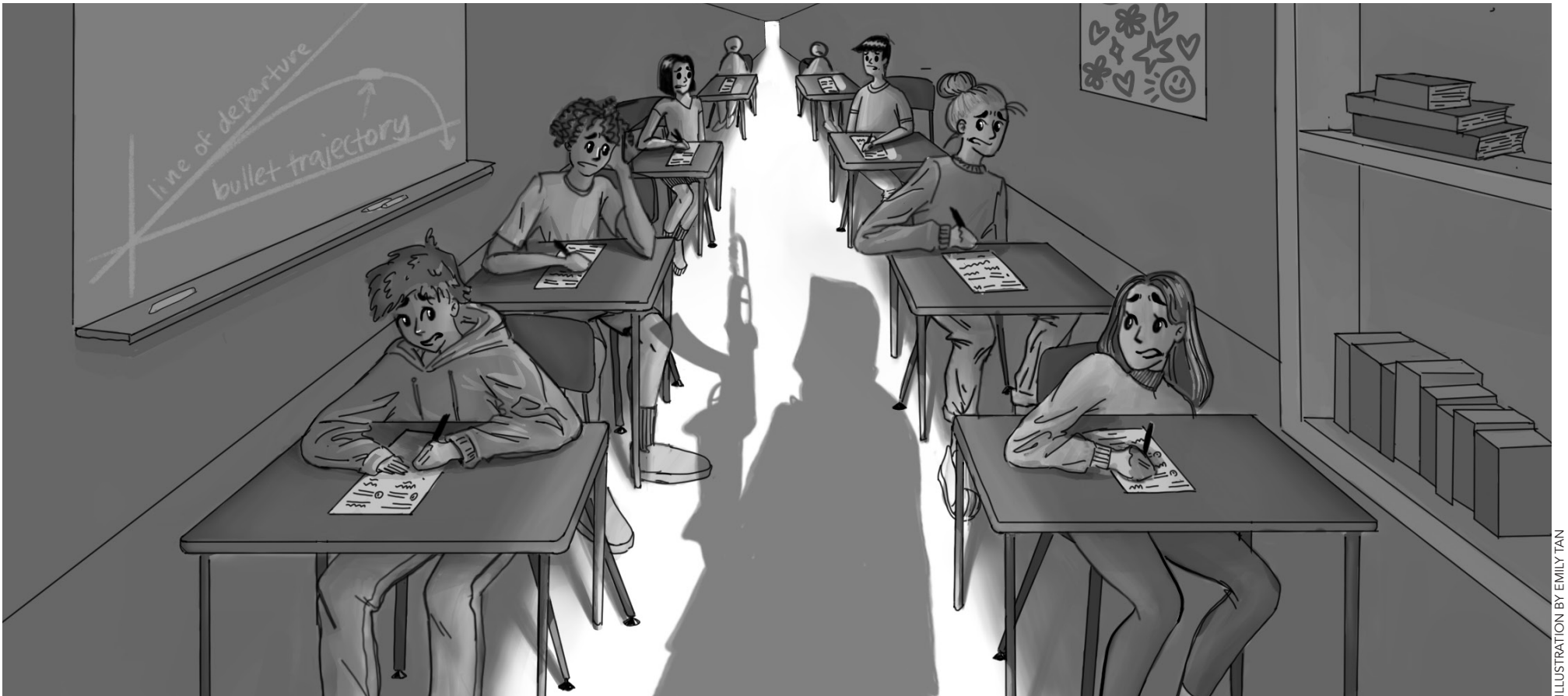


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Fifteen-year-old Adrian Palomares flees from yet another result of America's growing gun problem: the Gilroy Garlic Festival mass shooting, which left three dead and 13 injured on July 28.

Six days later, a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, was the next victim of gun violence. Less than 24 hours later, a gunman took ten lives in Dayton, Ohio.

In a span of one week, 35 people lost their lives as a result of the three senseless mass shootings in the United States. The deaths represent a national epidemic, one that has been highlighted by partisan debates over constitutional rights, domestic terrorism and mental health.

While left-wing congressional representatives continue to clash with the administration over gun reform, the problem has surprisingly affected an often reserved subset of the population: high school youth.

Like Adrian, Bethy Holderman, a sophomore who attends Christopher High School in Gilroy, California, was volunteering at the Gilroy Garlic Festival when she heard the shots ring out. She initially thought they were firecrackers before realizing and dropping to the ground in fear.

"High school students as a whole need to build a safe place for people to talk and get help and to just be there for everyone," Bethy said. "I would like to tell [members of Congress who oppose gun reform] to look at all the victims of these shootings in the eyes and listen to their stories. It's heartbreaking to hear or just read all of the stories from people, but especially young kids."

This current generation of high school students has taken a stance in politics as a result of having experienced the start of what is a major climate dilemma, resistance from the administration regarding youth-related issues like LGBTQ+ rights and immigration and the increasing danger of mass shootings, according to Politico.

Presidential candidates for the 2020 election have also expressed their sentiments and emphasized candidacy promises for tighter gun regulation in the future. Sen. Kamala Harris, D-C.A. pledged to implement universal background checks in the first Democratic primary debate.

"I will take executive action and I will put in place the most comprehensive background check policy we've had. I will require the ATF to take the licenses of gun dealers who violate the law. And I will ban by executive order the importation of assault weapons," Harris said in the debate. "It is enough. There have been plenty of good ideas from members of the United

States Congress. There has been no action. As president, I will take action."

Both the Gilroy and El Paso shootings occurred in areas that have a high immigrant population. The Gilroy shooter opened an Instagram account a couple days prior to the shooting, where he expressed support for a white supremacist book and anger towards Mexican immigrants and Silicon Valley workers, according to CBS San Francisco.

church mosque shooting in New Zealand as an inspiration for his actions.

Students dealing with gun violence are also reminded of last year's Parkland shooting, where 17 students and teachers were killed. The shooting sparked a mass student-led movement, March for Our Lives, which symbolized the first major act of gun reform advocacy involvement from Generation Z.

"I just think that it's really unfair right now," junior Sofia Fernandez, who is also of Mexican heritage, said. "I've never really had to deal with racist things, but I know my family has had [to]. It's just so surreal that right now my race is being targeted because of this whole immigration thing that's happening, and it's not okay."

These shootings follow Parkland as they continue to fuel teen participation and awareness in politics, especially with the 2020 presidential election rapidly approaching. In order to have their views and perspectives represented in government, it is imperative for youth to take a stand together and lobby for their rights.

"Students should speak up more for what America is. They should try to come up with their own laws over debates like gun control," Roberto said. "Students should speak out more to make sure stuff like this doesn't happen again."

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BETHY HOLDERMAN (10)
GILROY, CALIFORNIA

Similarly, NBC reported that the El Paso shooter took to the extremist message board 8chan to post an anti-immigrant manifesto, mentioning the Christ-

Jazz Factor

Members of the high school group dedicate themselves to spreading jazz and creating more opportunities for others

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Trills of assorted jazz music float through the pavement in front of the Glass House as six musicians tap their feet along to the rhythm. Before their performance at the San Jose Jazz Festival, the Jazz Factor, a band made up of several students from the Bay Area, started a little over two years ago as an idea to play music in a group setting.

"We rehearsed basically every week at Neil's place, and we just tried to scrap together a set list of five to six songs. So that summer, it was me, Brendan [Wong] (12), Max Lee (12) and Neil Ramaswamy ('19), on alto sax, tenor sax, piano and drums, respectively," founder Bryan Wang (12) said.

Booking venues proved to be difficult, and many early performances were staged at open houses or house parties. The group eventually found themselves routinely performing, including playing in downtown Los Altos. When the band is not featuring at an event, they meet every week to hone their skills.

"During the summer, we usually practice on weekdays, at either my house or the drummer's house, which is Ethan [Fong] (12)," said bass player William Rainow (12), who joined last year. "During the school year, we usually practice on weekends and during breaks, sometimes during office hours or after school."

The band's message of sharing music with the general public has already resonated with members of the community.

"They're so talented, and they're giving their time and their energy to have other people enjoy their music," said



ERIC FANG

SMOOTH TUNES The six members of Jazz Factor perform at the San Jose Jazz Festival. Their long-term goal is to create more opportunities for others to learn music.

Grace Hajjar (12), who attended the San Jose Jazz Festival. "The fact that they were out there on Saturday, playing for the public, it was really nice."

In the future, the Jazz Factor hopes to make a resounding impact on the community around them, donating their revenue to provide instruments and music lessons to others without the opportunity.

"We're looking to put the money to tangibly impact the community and better jazz," Bryan said. "So whether that's going to be in a charity or the local radio station, or to one of these school districts, the overall mission and intention is the same and that's just to support jazz and bring jazz wherever we can."