



Students lead nationwide rallies

Millions attend March for Our Lives rallies demanding stricter gun legislation

By Maria Ramos & Sean O'Connor
Senior Reporters

While more than 200,000 protesters went to Washington DC according to Digital & Imaging Service Inc. to call for greater gun control and demand action from their legislators, over an estimated of 800 parallel marches were held across the country, including every state of the union. An estimated 5,000 people attended the March for Our Lives rally in Princeton that filled up Hinds Plaza by the public library, according to one of the event's co-organizers, Reverend Bob Moore.

Princeton High School senior Dzyana Zubialeovich, who spearheaded the rally in Princeton and collaborated with Reverend Moore told The VOICE she expected only 500 to 800 people to show up.

“I had no idea it would be this successful. It’s amazing to see how many people support this issue,” she told The VOICE in an interview.

Mobs of faces could be seen peering through windows of the second and third floors of the Princeton Library, taking pictures of the rally below and holding signs. People in the lofts above Witherspoon Grill also stood outside their balconies to watch. One older couple posted a sign that read “thank you” on their railing.

Several people at the rally- both speakers and those who came simply to protest- have

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PHOTO | DREW MUMICH

Inspired by the leadership of the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL who survived the February 14 school shooting that took the lives of 17 of their friends, protesters lined the streets of New York City to advocate for stricter gun legislation at the March for Our Lives on March 24, 2018, including teens and elementary school children who spoke out

Mercer student shot to death, found in creek



PHOTO | FACEBOOK

Mercer engineering student Daniel Diaz-Delgado, 20, was found dead in Hamilton on March 24.

By Griffin Jones
Senior Reporter

The body of Mercer student Daniel Diaz-Delgado was found dead on the banks of the Assunpink Creek in Hamilton on March 24. According to authorities, when the body was recovered Diaz-Delgado had his hands tied behind his back and his face wrapped with duct tape. He had gunshot wounds to the head, torso and leg, according to a press release from the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office.

Diaz-Delgado was 20-years-old and was studying engineering at Mercer.

An article by Rebecca Everett on nj.com says that divers from the Trenton Fire Department spent around two hours recovering evidence from the scene. Additional reports indicate that several bags of evidence were removed from the crime scene.

When asked whether the police had any leads, Olga Diaz, Delgado-Diaz's mother, told The VOICE in an interview given in Spanish and translated by VOICE Editor-in-Chief Maria Ramos, “They do [have leads], but they told me not to talk about it.”

Casey DeBlasio, a public information officer with the

Mercer County Prosecutor's Office says there is no indication that the death was the result of a hate crime.

Christian Hernandez, a close friend of Diaz-Delgado's, said of his disappearance, “What the mom told me was when they came back around 4, about 5:30, he said he was going to set out to buy something for his little brother. His little brother told me that he might have been down around PA or Philly or Cherry Hill, but how he ended up in Hamilton, it's just weird to me”

Olga Diaz says she got

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PHOTO | MARIA RAMOS

A student from Princeton High School holds up a sign during the Princeton March for Our Lives on March 24.



PHOTO | MARIA RAMOS

Protesters of all ages participated in March for Our Lives rallies across the nation.

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been personally affected by gun violence.

Diane and Gerry Novik of Hamilton told The VOICE their grandson attends Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School where 17 students were killed last month in the shooting that led teenagers to start a movement. Though their grandson went unharmed, they were inspired to take up the cause.

"Nobody needs guns. Especially assault rifles," Gerry Novik said. When asked if he had a message for lawmakers Novik added "Keep us safe. The law should have been changed years ago."

Glenda Torres Scott, the mother of Benjamin DeVila, who back in 2012 was shot and killed at the age of 23 in Trenton, spoke at the rally. She is a member of Mercer Mom's Demand Action, an organization committed to "gun violence prevention." "I did not just lose my only son. I lost the opportunity to see him be a father, to see him mature, achieve all his goals," Scott said.

Ben Bollinger, a leader of The Princeton Against Gun Violence at Princeton University, spoke at the rally about a former classmate of his who took his own life with a gun.

"There's something strikingly raw about the first time you lose someone you considered your peer. Something that makes the frailty of life much more tangible than you ever realized," Bollinger said. When he heard about his former classmate's suicide he said he "drove home and cried in the driveway."

Joe Redmond, a senior at Princeton University who is studying chemical and biological engineering, survived the

"I get the feeling that nothing is changing, but when I saw the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School standing up, I felt inspired by them and I said, enough is enough."

-Joe Redmond

2013 shooting at Arapahoe High School in Colorado. He is also part of the Princeton Against Gun Violence group and spoke at the rally. He shared his story and said he believes it's time to take action and change things.

Fighting tears, he said "For the longest hour of my life I crouched in fetal position frantically texting my family and friends that I loved them and that things would be okay without me. The fire alarm blared as the library of my school caught fire. I clasped my friend's hand in a desperate attempt to stop hyperventilating. I was 18 and I felt the ceiling of death hovering over me. This wasn't how it was supposed to end, I thought. I hadn't even gotten into college yet."

"I get the feeling that nothing is changing, but when I saw the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School standing up, I felt inspired by them and I said, enough is enough," Redmond said.

Not everybody at the rally shared the same view on what to do about the country's gun violence crisis.

Assemblyman Roy Freiman of the 16th Legislative District, who spoke at the rally, said he is a gun owner, and this proved to be a matter of controversy.

"Turn in your gun!" people yelled multiple times while Freiman was speaking.

A mother and daughter from Hopewell, Christina Schell, 47, and Emily Schell, 19, told The

VOICE they own guns, however, believe in responsible gun ownership.

Christina, who is an employee of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, said people should be "trained to use them" and said she thought there should be national mandatory background checks.

Emily, who is a journalism major at Montclair State University, but taking some time off, said "It's not that we're trying to take away your guns. We're just trying to make the world a safe place. I don't see how anyone can be against that."

A Mercer student who preferred to stay anonymous wrote in a survey of 50 students conducted by The VOICE, "Gun violence is not an issue, mental health, poverty, bullying, illegal arms trade, government corruptions, and media misinformation are. Guns aren't bad in good hands."

Seventy-two percent of students surveyed said they think gun violence is a significant problem in the US. 96 percent said there should be greater restrictions. These numbers reflect and, in fact, exceed overall US trends. According to a recent POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, 68 percent support stricter gun laws.

Angie Reyes, a Mercer student majoring in business wrote in the survey, "You must be pretty blind to say that USA does not have a gun problem."

One speaker at the rally and co-organizer, Reverend Bob Moore, who for decades has been a gun control activist in New Jersey, acknowledged the political divide over gun policy in general and urged people at the rally to be patient, remain hopeful and seek bipartisan solutions.

"We can't be absolut-



PHOTO | MARIA RAMOS

Joe Redmond, a school shooting survivor and senior at Princeton University, gives a speech at the Princeton March for Our Lives on March 24.

ists and say that we've gotta get everything we ask immediately, or nothing is worthwhile," Moore said.

"We want everyone to do the right thing, whether they're Republican, or Democrat, or any other party!" he shouted.

The rally in Princeton did not consist merely of speeches. There was also music.

Beverly Owens, the Director of Music at the Witherspoon Presbyterian Church opened the event by singing "We Shall Overcome."

Later, Guy DeRosa, Mercer professor of Political Science played harmonica, accompanying Bucks County Community College Professor of Philosophy and Religion David Brahinsky, who played guitar and sang "Lean On Me" as part of the demonstration.

Professor DeRosa wasn't the only person from Mercer present at the rally. The manager of Mercer's eatery, Adele Staab was also there. "Enough is enough!" she said, expressing concern about her daughter who teaches second grade. She said

of the students spearheading the "March for Our Lives" movement, "They're so articulate. So adult." She compared their activism to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Sixty-eight percent of Mercer students who participated in The VOICE survey are registered to vote, and another 24 percent are eligible to register but have not yet registered. A third of those who could register didn't plan to and six percent of those who are registered don't plan to vote. Another 8 percent cannot vote because of immigration status or age.

Zubialevich told The VOICE she wants to see more people exercising their right to vote. "I hope that the event today and the events all over the country encourage young people to go out and vote in the next election because historically there have been low voter turnouts for young people and, my generation, people my age, so I think it would be great to increase that and have our voices heard through marches, rallies, elections and any other ways possible," she said.

NYC March for Our Lives rally



By Drew Mumich
Senior Reporter

Since the Columbine High-school Massacre in 1999, 187,000 students have experienced the effects of gun violence at school according to an article in the Washington Post by John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich.

To combat this threat, schools created what is known as a lockdown drill. These drills are made to ensure student safety, for if and when an intruder, mainly an active shooter, enters the school.

As Cole Montplaisir, a building construction technology major from Mercer, whose first lockdown drill was in ninth grade explains, "The lady in the main office would say this is a lockdown drill, it may be real, it may not be, so shelter in place and depending on where you were, if you were in a classroom, the lights went off, the shades went down, the doors were closed and locked, and hid behind the filing cabinet, or the dividers."

With this in the back of every teenager's mind, and the recent event of the Parkland, FL shooting, at the forefront of their mind. The youth of America flooded the streets of Washington DC to protest Congress to put in stricter laws on gun control on the national level.

Washington DC wasn't the only city to have a march through, with dozens of sister marches, one of the larger ones was held next to Central Park in Manhattan of New York City.

Men, women and children poured into Columbus Avenue by bus, car, boat and train, to support the recent victims of the Parkland Shooting.

The official march began with a rally at 11 A.M. on 72nd street, though due to the enormous crowds, the marchers pushed the parade's beginning all the way back to 86th street.

The crowds were separated like a dam by the New York City Police by metal barricades. These opened much like a levee letting the let the crowd trickle down to the next city block as the let protesters from the adjoining streets flood into Columbus Avenue.

Even with the recent events of Parkland FL, the atmosphere was anything but melancholy, as protesters danced, cheered and chanted all the way down Columbus Avenue.

As 20-year-old Jullie Sharps from New York City told The VOICE, "This has been happening since I have been in high school, and nothing has been done on a federal level, and it's disgusting to see how many politicians are in the pocket of the NRA."

With chants like "Ballots not bullets" and "No more silence, end gun violence." The protesters were emotional and determined to take a stand. As



PHOTO | DREW MUMICH

The election of Donald Trump prompted the Women's Marches. Since then, women in particular have become vocal advocates on the political issues that concern them most. The gun control movement #Enough has prompted teen women to become even more motivated to participate.

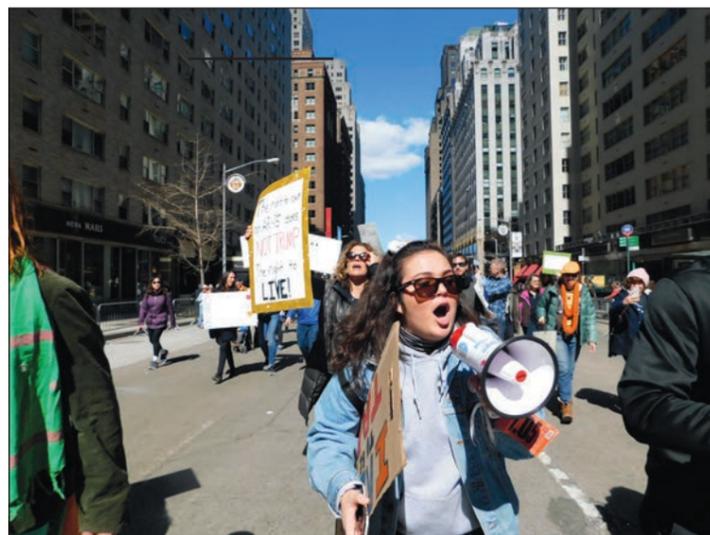


PHOTO | DREW MUMICH

The sound of the NYC March for Our Lives was dominated by chants lead by women on megaphones, and the fervent beat of drum corps.

Julia Betancourt, a high school senior from Long Island explains, "It makes me feel hopeful for the future because our generation is the next one that is going to be voting."

The marches around the nation demanded change in gun legislation on a nationwide scale. The last major gun reform was the implementation of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) in 2007 by former President Bush.

The Giffords Law Center explains it "provided financial incentives for states to provide to NICS (the database used to perform a background check when a firearm is purchased from a federally licensed dealer) information relevant to whether a person is prohibited from possessing firearms, including the names and other relevant identifying information of persons adjudicated as a mental defective or those committed to mental institutions."

There are federal laws created to ensure a broad sense of gun safety but is ultimately left up to each state. California has the strictest gun laws, while Louisiana has the most lenient gun laws, according to deseretnews.com.

Diane Rizzo, an English Professor who had an experience in Los Angeles with an active shooter in 1986 told The VOICE "If you think that policy decisions will help change a culture, then policy decisions are the way to go. But I think things have to change at the cultural level, that people have to have to have a different relationship to gun violence than they currently do, and I'm not sure what would change that."

In the end, New York was one of the larger marches in support of stricter gun legislation, and protesters came far and wide to support the cause.

As David Orlando, explains "I think this moment is



Over 800 March for Our Lives rallies were held on March 24 with one or more in all 50 states.

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-Prof. Diane Rizzo

unique, in that there has been more momentum than in the past, it seems that in the media cycle, there is a protest three weeks after the initial event, with is when it normally dies out, but I think this is helping keep the it rolling in a way that hasn't happened before."

Rachael Westbrook and Maria Ramos contributed reporting for this article.

RIGHT: Sisters participated in the NYC March for Our Lives carrying their homemade sign reading "Speaking for those who can't...stop gun violence."



PHOTO | DREW MUMICH



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

An attendee at the Washington DC March for Our Lives is brought to tears by the story of student activist Edna Chavez.



Young people of different backgrounds, races and religions came together to protest.

By Griffin Jones
Senior Reporter

Over 200,000 people of all ages descended on Washington DC to support gun reform initiatives on March 24 according to Digital & Imaging Service Inc.

Following the death of 17 students in Parkland, Florida at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, surviving students began to push for stricter gun laws.

Their activism caught the attention of EMPOWER, the youth branch of the organization behind the Women's Marches.

The March for Our Lives on March 24 was the result of their efforts thus far.

A number of celebrities performed at the event between powerful speeches given by student activists telling their own stories of loss that brought many in the audience to tears.

Often the topic was not only about school shootings but also about the urban violence faced by many black and Latino youth, such as when student activist Edna Chavez spoke about the loss of her brother Ricardo Chavez.

In a survey of Mercer students conducted by The VOICE, it was found that half of all black students surveyed knew someone that had died due to gun violence.

But the most powerful moment of the rally came when Emma Gonzalez, the face of the Stoneman Douglas survivors, came on stage.

Following a powerful speech, during which she listed all of the things her fallen classmates would "never again" do, she suddenly fell totally silent.

In that instant the crowd fell absolutely silent, barely a single sound escaped from the hundreds of thousands gathered there. The National Mall was transformed into a sacred space and Gonzalez into a priest leading a wake.

Confusion soon spread in the crowd, with various cheers of support coming up at various times. It was unquestionably an awkward moment, as all present wondered what Gonzalez was doing. Yet she stood resolute, tears in her eyes, with unwavering determination.

Finally she spoke, "Since the time that I came

out here," she said. "The shooter abandoned his rifle, ran to the cape and walk fr

And with the crowd going wild. It was as if I had been witness to a school shooting.

Student Sandy Hook Elementary School is in the hands of high schoolers.

Sandy Hook school shooting victims and their families.

Ben Alpert, a student at Stoneman Douglas High School, shared a text message he received from a student who said, "I've heard the gunshots and I'm loud a gunshot in the hallway."

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PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

ABOVE: A girl sits on a tree to get a better view of the March for our Lives rally in Washington, DC on March 24, 2018.

LEFT: An African American teen draped in an American flag bearing the names of young black men who were the victims of police gun violence, stands before the Capitol Building in Washington DC as part of the March for Our Lives protest rally.

March for Our Lives rally



Best gun violence during the March for Our Lives in Washington DC on March 24, 2018. PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

...said, "it has been 6 minutes and 20 seconds. The shooter has ceased shooting and will soon be arrested. Blend in with the students as they escape. Be free for an hour before arrest." ...with that the crowd at once began to cheer and cheer as if suddenly all realized that they had reached a historic moment. ...ents from Newtown High School, the high school district that Sandy Hook Elementary School in, were present to support their fellow students. ...y Hook was the site of another mass shooting, where 20 children and 6 adults lost their lives. ...Albee, a student at Sandy Hook High School, shared his thoughts about the two schools in a video, writing "The thing that's different between Sandy Hook and Parkland is that in Sandy Hook, the grief of parents of victims, but the children lived - the children who had to realize how young they are at such a young age - were kept silent." ...continued, "After Parkland, the survivors came into the spotlight and they've been working to right the wrong they experienced first hand. ...ous mass shootings were not the only focus, however, as many came bearing signs for those they lost to guns, faces that have been etched on the news. ...ng them was Paula Chaves, a 17-year-old student at Lake High School in Reston, West Virginia, who brought a poster with a picture of her father. ...been waiting for an opportunity like this to speak, because of what happened with my father. ...The VOICE. ...years ago, she says, she lost her father at their then home of Puerto Rico. He was shot by two men outside an ATM, she says, and she had to hand over the money they wanted, and he was shot. ...wasn't the last encounter Chaves had with gun violence, however. On March 9th of this year, her father was placed on lockdown due to reports of a shooting on campus. Although the reports were false later, according to a tweet by Fairfax County, Chaves says, "Nobody knew what was

going on for 40 minutes, we were in the dark for 40 minutes." She also said, "I was just thinking in my head, 'I'm going to be the next person in my family that's shot and killed,' and it was just very terrifying not knowing anything, because when you're in that situation, when you're inside, you don't know anything. And so I was texting my family and my friends, just saying our good-byes just in case anything did happen." A recurring theme throughout the rally was that the March's efforts were not going to end when the day did. Repeatedly speakers called on the audience to register to vote. When David Hogg, another Parkland survivor, took the stage, he started his speech by attaching a price tag to his shirt labeled "\$1.05." He said of the gesture, "I'm going to start off by putting this price tag right here as a reminder for you guys to know how much Marco Rubio took for every student's life in Florida." In a page entitled "Don't Put a Price on Our Lives" on the March for Our Lives website, the movement claims "There are 3,140,167 students enrolled in Florida. Marco Rubio has received \$3,303,355 from the NRA. That comes out to \$1.05 per student." Marco Rubio is a senator from Florida, where Parkland is. Hogg's message was clear, support gun control or be voted out. He finished his speech by saying, "To those politicians supported by the NRA that allow the continued slaughter of our children and our future, I say get your resumes ready." Tappan Vickery, a volunteer coordinator with HeadCount, an organization that helps to register voters at events was there striving to ensure that. Throughout the mall there were seven stations set up by HeadCount, and over 800 volunteers spread out across the area, Vickery said. Their goal was to collect a thousand total new registrations by the end of the event. At just the station she was at she noted they had registered about 200 new voters. She noted that most of the new registrations were for young voters, and a number of those too young to vote had pre-registered so that they can vote once they turn 18. She told The VOICE, "It's so awesome to see these kids excited about wanting to engage."



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

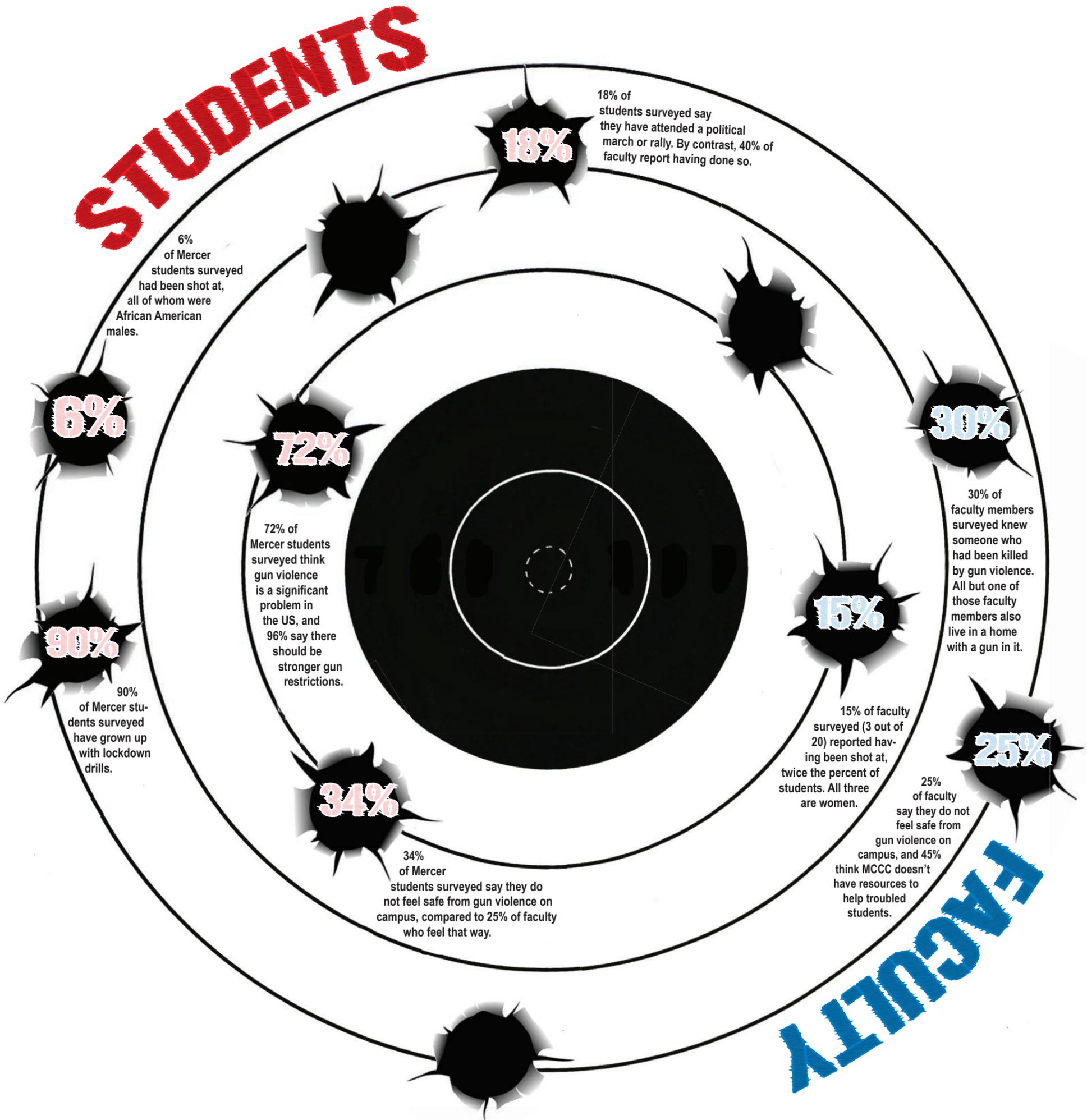
TOP: Many protesters at the March for Our Lives carried creative and politically charged signs. ABOVE: Attendees watch Emma Gonzalez on one of the many screens spread throughout the National Mall. RIGHT: The Newseum in Washington DC set up a wall asking protesters to write why they chose to participate in the March for Our Lives.



PHOTO | GRIFFIN JONES

EXPOSURE TO GUN VIOLENCE CAMPUS SURVEY RESULTS

The VOICE surveyed 50 students and 20 faculty members at Mercer to find out about their experiences with guns and gun violence, and their views on the subject. Here are some of the key results and what you had to say.



The human cost of nationalism and fear

Mexican in the age of Trump

PERSPECTIVES



Maria Ramos

My home town is Chihuahua, Mexico just four hours away from the border between Juarez and El Paso, Texas. I will never forget walking over the bridge under the Rio Bravo. I was crossing legally with my visa and all my papers in order. It had taken months to fill out the forms, gather the documents, secure the visas and permits I needed to enter legally, but looking over the bridge and seeing all the border patrols officers with their dogs staring at me and the others who were crossing I felt as if I was guilty of something.

I was coming to the United States through an agency to work taking care of a family's young children, but by the time I had to show my visa to the border patrol officer I was sweating and scared. Why was I so scared if everything was in order? Maybe it was because of the message I had heard for

so long, that I was Mexican and we are coming to steal jobs.

Once the officer let me into the country, I felt relieved, calm at last. I had made it to *el otro lado del charco*, the other side of the river. Now everything was going to be great, I thought. I was here to accomplish the American dream, my American-Mexican dream.

Now I wake up each morning wonder if the president is going to ban people like me from entering to the USA soon. Or maybe he'll cancel all the student visas. And when is that construction of the wall is going to start, a wall that's going to be exactly where I crossed the border to come to New Jersey 4 years ago.

I came here by the big door, with a visa that allowed me to travel back and forth to my beautiful Chihuahua and see my family, but after one year I had to change my status from J-1 (au pair visa) to F-1 (student visa), and this change had a huge cost for me. I am not talking about the \$600 dollars that I had to pay between fees, forms and permissions, I am talking about not being able to see my family for two years. It was the toughest time of my life. At only 19 years old I now felt trapped in this country.

I hope one day I can be in front of a border patrol officer or any police officer and not feel that old sick fear. I hope the picture of those dogs at the border staring at me disappears. I hope to stop feeling guilty, guilty for being Mexican.

The feeling of being legal in a place but not able to travel to your country is indescribable. At night I would pray that nothing would happen to my family because I couldn't travel home if something bad happened.

After two years I was so homesick that I started to look for plane tickets to get back home. Things were changing, the US presidential elections were coming up, and things didn't look good for Mexicans if Trump was to win. So I took the risk and went home and re-applied for a student visa. I told myself if they denied my visa it would be destiny, as sign that America wasn't for me.

But I got approved for my visa for four more years, came back and restarted my education. By then, however, I had to watch the daily political campaign of Donald Trump spewing hate towards Mexicans and saying over and over: "we are going to build a wall, and

Mexico is going to pay for it!"

I remember laughing as I saw all the memes about him, and thinking this man is never going to be the US president, then *ay caramba!* Donald J. Trump is the president of the US. I couldn't believe it. So wait, no more avocados? No more Cinco de Mayo?

My mom kept calling, "*Mjia y ahora qué va pasar? Vas a poder visitarnos otra vez?*" Sweetie, now what's going to happen? Will you be able to visit us again?" Hearing my mom asking me these questions was breaking my heart but I knew now more than ever I had to be strong and show to my family back home, and all the people here that being a Mexican immigrant in this country shouldn't be a barrier to success, that all those insults from Trump about Mexicans are not true, that instead we are part of the culture of this country, all our hard work needs to be recognized.

Now I am a full-time student with a 3.6 GPA. I'm a cross country runner for a team that won the Regionals for the first time and went to the 2016 Nationals. I'm Editor-in-Chief of The College VOICE, an award-winning newspaper of excellence. But even so, I don't

know if my effort is enough to prove to people that what President Trump said is not true.

He told the world: "When Mexico sends it people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with them. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."

My roles at Mercer County Community College have helped me pursue my dream and demonstrate that Mexican immigrants aren't coming to destroy the country, sell drugs or rape people. We are here because we want a better future that for different reasons we couldn't find in our country.

I hope one day I can be in front of a border patrol officer or any police officer and not feel that old sick fear. I hope the picture of those dogs at the border staring at me disappears. I hope to stop feeling guilty, guilty for being Mexican.

I choose to be an immigrant in the US and I will never regret my decision. I am proud and thankful for being Latina and Mexicana. I will not stop until I achieve my Mexican-American dream, or until my visa gets cancelled, even if things get harder in this country, this country that has become *mi nueva casa*, my new home. I will keep doing my best.

Russian-American in the age of Trump

PERSPECTIVES



Svetlana Craft

One night in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, when I was 5, the police came. This wasn't anything new considering my mom was always belligerent, drunk and in trouble. I thought they were there for her, but they were there for me. I never saw my mother or sister again after that night.

I was put in one orphanage and several months later moved to another, even farther away from home. I stayed there for two years.

Mostly I was in one big room with the smallest beds you can imagine. There were well over 30 children per room. I remember having notebooks with about 10 pages in them to learn how to write. There were

three ladies that watched my age group, but only one really cared about us.

In the orphanage some children were mean, others were quiet, some, like myself, tried to make the best of it. I had one good friend, her name was also Svetlana. Her bed was right next to mine and we would always end up talking at night. We'd get caught and the grown ups would make us stand still at the end of our beds as punishment, making us even more restless for "misbehaving."

It wasn't all bad. The snowy days were my favorite. In Russia, you don't stay inside if it snows you go out and take advantage of it. That is exactly what the other children and I did.

I never thought that I would get adopted; my mom would call every few months and promise to visit and come get me. I believed her, but after years went by I started to get the picture. She was never going to come.

In an orphanage, if you are not an infant, the possibility of you actually getting adopted is very slim. The older kids like myself were always around longer if not until the age of 16 when we were kicked out.

The Craft family from

America came to visit me and later I was told by one of the ladies at the orphanage that I was being adopted. I was eight, and I was more than okay with it because I was sure any place was better than there.

It was a long flight to the US on my own. I remember my American grandma crying--I'm assuming tears of joy--when I finally walked into my new room. I didn't even know people lived in that kind of luxury to have their own room. I was full of excitement. But I woke up the next morning, opened my curtains and it was raining outside. I started to cry. I had imagined America would always be a sunny paradise. I thought: Oh no! This family has brought me somewhere even worse than where I was before!

My adoptive family knew basically no Russian. Between us we had a few simple words like: hi, hungry, and sleep. They would try to get me to understand. I would just point at things a lot. There would be no conversation, yet a lot of laughter and fun.

The inability I had to communicate with my new family made it impossible for me to understand what was going on. When my father first took me

to Grace N. Rogers elementary school, after about 3 months of living in the US, I thought I was being brought back into an orphanage. Once again I started to cry. The same thing happened when I met my babysitter. Were they leaving me with this person? But my father always came back to get me.

I have seen the best of both American and Russian cultures, the people, the food, the differences and the similarities.

I hold a warm place in my heart for my home country despite the circumstances that caused me to leave, but now everyday I encounter endless negativity about Russians. The Russians rigged the election, the Russians are bad, they are coming for us, people say. It's like the Cold War never ended with all the suspicion and animosity still going on. But just like during the actual Cold War it's not the actual Russian people but the government that is to blame, and Americans constantly overlook this difference.

The Russian people are suffering under President Vladimir Putin. Putin does not respect or care for them whatsoever. Everything a person says is censored; there is no right to free speech. In the beginning of the

month of April there were protests in major cities across Russia which ended up being one of the largest mass demonstrations of their kind. The protests were against the abusive and corrupt government. What was the result?

Many Russians were literally arrested and carried away during the protests. Russians are being thrown in jail for the slightest offenses or for simply trying to speak up. How is it, I wonder, that Americans, many of whom are also taking to the streets to protest their government, still not making a clear distinction between Russian government and the Russian citizens?

Most people I encounter do not realize I'm Russian-American. I went to East Windsor public schools, I don't have an accent. I have a Russian name but people don't seem to notice. They badmouth Russians right in front of me. I try to stay calm despite being offended. I remind myself these people do not know what Russians are going through, they are ignorant, they do not know real suffering. I feel bad for them sometimes, because they may be Americans but they don't understand the American dream like I do. Hatred for others is not part of the American dream.

Muslim life in Trump's America

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PERPSECTIVES



Mohammad Wiswall

After a year of travelling overseas, being back in the States was a relief. The weather didn't scorch my skin and the air didn't smell like burning garbage and diesel. It was the first time seeing so much green and it almost hurt my eyes.

But what I missed the most was the diversity of the United States of America, where crowds are filled with people from different nationalities and backgrounds. However it's not the same everywhere.

In Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for the most part if you were an immigrant from West Africa you would stay with other immigrants, and if you were an Arab you would stay with the Arabs.

If you were a Yemeni Arab you would stay with other Yemenis. If you were a Pakistani or Afghan the same applied. So this put me and my family in a strange place, as I'm biracial.

My father is white and of British descent and my mother is Bengali. In Jeddah I could blend in with my dark hair and tan skin. I could easily be overlooked as a local. However for my father it was a bit harder because people would mistake him for a light skinned Pakistani or Afghan.

Whenever we walked

down the street it would look strange to the locals. "Why is an Arab kid with a Pakistani man?" Was probably the question going through their heads.

While living in Saudi Arabia my father and I decided to take a night out. We were bored sitting in the house so we decided to go to a patch of sand in an abandoned garden a couple of blocks away from our house, make some tea and try out a new tent we bought.

As the sun set we could hear the call to prayer from the nearby mosques for the maghrib, or sunset prayer. As we got ready to pray a police officer came to us with his pistol in his grip and walked toward us cautiously. We were then put in the back of his car.

My father, who spoke Arabic, was able to understand what they were saying amongst each other. From what he could understand, it seemed the police were confused about why a fourteen-year-old Arab was with a Pakistani man. It was hard for them to fathom that a biracial child who looked like an Arab was American, and was with an older American.

After hours of being in the police station we were eventually taken back to the place of arrest and questioned by the police chief as to why we were there. Eventually since we weren't doing anything wrong we were released. However this experience taught me that mixing of cultures, which I saw as normal in the States, wasn't normal in other countries.

Once I returned to America in 2014 with this experience in my memory I realized that America's diversity is our strength. America's history of accepting immigrants and

people of different backgrounds is what made us unique. We do indeed have something in America that not many other countries may have and that is diversity.

This is the way I viewed America until the 2016 elections.

Fortunately, here at Mercer the campus is very diverse. In my classes I have fellow students from Barbados, West Africa, the Dominican Republic, Israel and so many other countries.

If you were to look around in your classes you will find someone from somewhere. But the diversity in America and here at Mercer needs to be acknowledged and protected because those students from different countries may not feel welcomed or at home.

However, with the election of Donald Trump there was a wave of open racism and hate I couldn't believe even existed in the U.S.

I remember going onto social media sites like Facebook and seeing people commenting under the videos of Trump spewing his dislike of Islam and Muslims. The comments would say things like "Let's just kill them all" or "If they like sharia law so much they should go back to Saudi Arabia."

The scary part about this is that if you went onto the profiles of these commentators they looked and acted like your everyday citizens: grandmothers, firefighters, and teachers. It seemed like the people I identified with as fellow Americans had isolated and abandoned me.

Sometimes when I'm working at my family's cafe I tend to have a good discussion

with my customers. Eventually they ask me my name. When I reply with "Mohammad," what sometimes follows are looks of confusion or suspicion. Sometimes the discussion presses on into a spiral of uncomfortable questions.

Some that are clearly based off the words of the president. According to an article last year by Jenna Johnson and Abigail Hauslohner for the Washington Post, President Trump is quoted as saying, "I think Islam hates us. There's something there that — there's a tremendous hatred there. There's a tremendous hatred. We have to get to the bottom of it. There's an unbelievable hatred of us."

This correlates with the questions I get from other people. Once I was asked, "What is Islam's stance on America?" Another time someone asked me, "Are Muslim women allowed to speak in public?"

These questions shine light on the division and suspicion raised by the president. Also, those types of questions push that feeling of isolation deeper.

What separates us from the rest of the world is our history of multiculturalism. Now as a college student with these experiences I want others at college to also see this perceptive and act on it.

Here at Mercer the diversity is so prevalent. We have students from all different backgrounds and ethnicities, so let's make this integration remain the norm even if the current president makes negative remarks about our fellow students who are Muslims or immigrants.

Let's us make sure we are including and welcoming so that the isolation.

top ten

PLACES TO PROCRASTINATE AT MERCER

- Honors Lounge
- "The Caf" aka student cafeteria
- Library
- Quad
- Random chairs by door to the LA
- Floor of BS hall
- West parking lot
- Learning Center
- Art Gallery
- Student newspaper office - SC 120

Olympics TV ratings were down? We can fix that

AS I SEE IT



Rachael Westbrook

According to USA Today, the ratings for this years winter Olympic games were down 17 percent from Sochi. No surprise. The whole thing is sluggish and predictable. But I have the solution. Add some real challenge.

The opening ceremony is agonizingly slow. Solution: add bears. I don't mean teddy bears. I mean real bears. Oh yeah, that's get people moving. Better for spectators, good cardio for the athletes.

Curling was given a lot of screen time this year, and it is oddly appealy, but it looks like something your aunt could do with some of her bowling buddies. Solutio: Make curling a hockey hybrid. Keep the curling outfits and the curling stones, but follow the rules of hockey. Players would use the dainty brooms to whack at the granite stones. Think about it. All the fast pace of hockey with people smashing into each other, but the stones still moving slowly.

Halfpipe also got a lot of air time this year. We had a collective eyeball roll when American athlete Chloe Kim tweeted that she was getting hangry. Solution: Combine halfpipe and a food eating contest. Athletes have to eat a minimum of one breakfast sandwich as they flip and spin down the pipe. Every sandwich after that will give you extra points. Obviously there will be vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options.

Another American athlete, snowboarder Red Gerard said he stayed up late the night before his competition bingeing on Netflix which led him to oversleep. Solution: double up. Make the snowboarders watch Netflix while doing their tricks

so no one will have to stay up late and bore us on the way down. Point deductions will be made for dropping tablet, TV or laptop on the way down, and the bigger the device, the higher the points for holding onto it. Please someone goes for a 80" flat screen.

Skeleton is basically just sledding and we all know it. Where's the skill? Solution: mountains resorts already use TNT to create controlled avalanches. You can see where I'm going with this. Why race against a clock when you can race against snow? Whoever ends up closer to the surface when the snow settles wins.

Speed skating is the most predictable of all. It's just

a race in circles. Solution: add obstacles.:trampolines hurdles, extra points for going up rock walls in skates.

Think how challenging the games could become. And that is what the Olympics are all about, challenging ourselves.

Your ratings problems are solved NBC. You're welcome.



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