

# THE TRIBAL TRIBUNE

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## Pushing to end preventable violence

In 1968, the famous lyrics of John Lennon -- "When I hold you in my arms and I feel my finger on your trigger, I know nobody can do me no harm" -- hit Apple Records.

*Happiness is a Warm Gun.*

*A warm gun.*

Shots already fired.

At something?

Or at someone?

More Americans have died from guns in the United States since 1970 than in all the wars in American history combined.

On Jan. 29-31, over 1,300 congregations across South Carolina united to reduce gun violence known as "Stand Up Sunday."

Shocked by the Mother Emanuel AME Church tragedy in June, groups across the state worked to shrink the percentage of guns getting into the wrong hands. All this while still supporting the Second Amendment's guarantee of the right of a citizen to own guns and not take away guns to people who already legally own them.

In 2015 the number of fatalities due to gun violence surpassed the number of deaths due to car accidents.

Gun violence is a public health issue.

Just like texting and driving, smoking and driving drunk.

Preventable.

But where do we start?

Forty percent of guns in the United States were purchased without a background check.

Gun Sense SC, the organization that led "Stand Up Sunday," focuses on a mission that mandates that no guns be sold until background checks are completed, closing loopholes relating to gun show and online sales and prosecuting illegal or "bad apple" gun dealers.

Ninety percent of guns used in crimes are supplied by five percent of the dealers. All gun dealers should have to follow the same laws.

As the law stands now, gun dealers can sell a gun to anyone at a gun show and the buyers do not have to fill out a background check.

After the recent Kalamazoo, Michigan, shooting on Feb. 20 left six people dead, the suspect did not have a concealed carry license.

President Barack Obama once again stated his position that he refuses to vote for any candidate, whether Democrat or Republican, who opposes tighter gun laws.

In the 2015 Public Policy Polling, 89 percent of South Carolina voters supported background checks on all gun purchases, including 91 percent of Republicans and 90 percent of Democrats.

But one thing remains true. States with



Kendall Rickell // editorial cartoon

tighter gun control laws appear to have fewer gun-related deaths.

There are negative correlations between firearm deaths and states that ban assault weapons (-.45), require trigger locks (-.42) and mandate safe storage requirements for guns (-.48), according to *The Atlantic* in 2011.

Mass shootings can not be the only reminder that our gun control laws need to change -- by then, it is too late. Lives are lost and communities are left heartbroken and fear stricken.

A proactive America is a safer America.

And America is not the only one with this issue.

In 1996, a mass killing of 35 people in Australia led the nation's prime minister to ban certain rapid-fire long guns. A national firearms agreement was made that led to the government purchasing back up to 650,000 guns. It also required stricter regulations of firearms in public hands.

It did not end the ownership of guns. But since the regulation 14 years ago, Australia is yet to have another mass shooting.

And after the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy

Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., President Obama wanted the Center for Disease control to extend research.

He proposed an increase in education and enforcement efforts of existing laws at the state level.

The Center for Disease Control could expose the causes of gun violence with more studies, but the organization will not be able to do so because of a ban by Congress in paying for any type of studies about gun violence.

We need to encourage congregants to sign prepared letters to legislators until a real change occurs. We do not need wait for the next presidential election to make changes. Why not start now?

This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue that we all should focus our attention towards. There should be no party division on the issue.

We need to fight as one against gun violence. Put aside political differences, Republican, Democrat or Independent and unite.

### Editorial