

CONNECTIONS TO THE **BiG** WORLD OUTSIDE

THE **BiG** STORY

TIMELINE OF TRAGEDY

And how local STUDENTS WERE AFFECTED

The summer of 2016 was most definitely a time of controversy, tension, and political confrontation across America. While the issues may seem at first to have been unrelated, they were actually all too closely interwoven to have been viewed separately. With the most heated presidential campaign in history underway, the country was witness to way too many acts of emotion and violence. And somewhere along the way, political awareness took a much more prominent place in the lives of Southwest Georgians than they had before, particularly for high school students who were soon to become voters.

JUNE 10

Singer and songwriter Christina Grimmie is shot and killed at a fan meet-and-greet in Orlando, Florida. This death in the music industry took other artists and the fans by surprise and made everyone wonder whether it was safe to attend and host meet-and-greets. It also made teenage music fans wonder how safe they were at concerts, something that had not really seemed to be an issue before. Grimmie was only 22 when she died, but she left a mark in music production and in the hearts of fans everywhere, including those ardent fans like **Lauren Horne (12)**. "It was really sad for me because I had listened to her and looked up to her since I was 11," **Horne (12)** said. When I found out I was just really shocked and confused as to why anyone would do that to someone as kindhearted as her; it was extremely disheartening."



photo by B. Wilson

JUNE 12

American-born terrorist Omar Mateen pledged allegiance to ISIS and then used an automatic weapon to kill 50 people and wound 53 others at a popular gay club in Orlando – the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history. Mateen, an American citizen whose parents were born in Afghanistan, died in a shootout with police following a three-hour standoff at the Pulse nightclub. The effect on the LGBT community was extreme, even in local circles. **Kiana Benton (12)** said, "It made me feel like there was never gonna be acceptance for us. I felt like all the community would ever be was hated. For a while I didn't feel comfortable when people asked me if I was gay or bi[sexual] because I felt like the purpose was to wait for an alteration to occur."



photo by B. Wilson

For more about something on this page, take a

BIG JUMP to 68-69.

Not **JUST** about the **VIOLENCE**; **ALSO** about the **RIGHTS**.

It was a summer of controversy and concern, of violence and reflection. Ultimately, the blame fell on the guns and those who possess them. It became a question on everyone's mind: **Should America's government limit the ownership and availability of personal guns?**

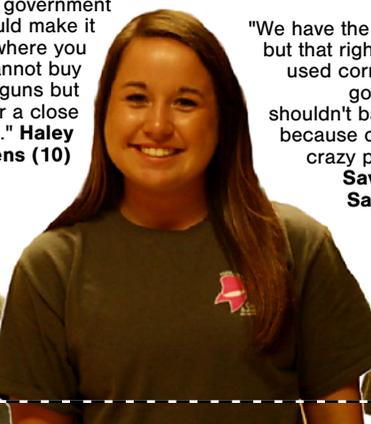
"There should be an evaluation on people. Guns are never going away. The people with or without guns should be checked in order to get guns." **Anna Logsdon (10)**



"I don't think guns should be taken away. It is our Second Amendment right." **Sam Lovelace (11)**



"In my opinion, gun control should be a thing but the government should make it where you cannot buy guns but under a close eye." **Haley Owens (10)**



"We have the right for guns, but that right should be used correctly. The government shouldn't ban it just because of a few crazy people." **Savannah Salo (12)**



GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Editorial Board; REPORTERS: M. Rosa, J. LeBlanc, M. Casey

Customer is allowed to have objects outside of the margin.

TRIM LINE

TRIM LINE TRIM LINE



photo by J. Raines

THE SUMMER THAT CHANGED America

JULY 5, 6

Police responding to a disturbance complaint shot and killed mentally handicapped Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge. The next day, Philando Castile was shot and killed during a traffic stop in Minneapolis. Both gentlemen were African-American. Hours later, military veteran Micah Johnson took a high powered assault rifle into downtown Dallas in a protest against police brutality, murdering five police officers and critically injuring others. Suddenly it was scary to be a policeman, it was scary to be a young black man, and it was scary to wonder what would happen next. For some, the atmosphere immediately became fearful. For others, it almost seemed as if a veil had been lifted. **Kayla Matthews (11)** said, "I feel liberated by the fact that people were finally recognizing that racism is still prevalent in today's society and that they were willing to take action. For too long people have been passive about issues like this, and it is time to take a stand and fight back."



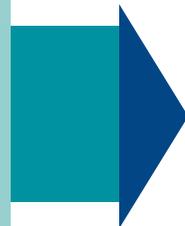
photo by B. Wilson

AUGUST 13

July's mass murder targeting Orlando's LGBT community spurred several rallies during the summer for LGBT activists, including one in Washington, that included a massive campaign for gun reform. The rally brought intensified efforts to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all citizens regardless of gender or sexual orientation and to restrict gun laws. The fact that the rally gained national attendance during a hotly-contested presidential campaign intensified the emphasis on both equality and gun reform issues. **Josh Jimmerson (12)** expressed his concern that access to high-powered guns actually deprives a society of more lives that it preserves. "We cannot protect freedom when there is no one left here to experience it," **Jimmerson (12)** said. "A restriction on these weapons that are meant for battle could have been a limiting factor in [this summer's] shootings and reduced the toll of death and injury. . . . But it seems to never be an issue for some until it is their loved one being remembered."



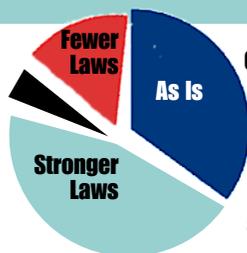
photo by T. Bischoff



"People should go through a variety of tests in order to have guns."
Sarima Moosa (11)



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Of the 363 students surveyed, 38 percent favored keeping present gun laws as they are, 42 percent believed stronger gun control policies are needed, 16 percent believed there should be fewer gun restrictions than presently exist, and 4 percent believe private citizens should be restricted from owning guns.

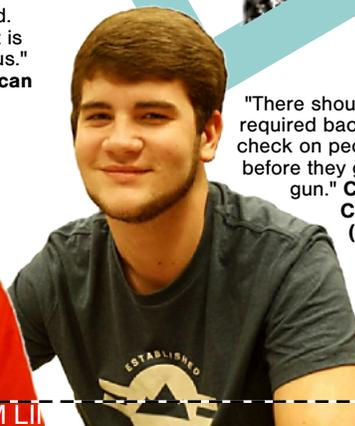
"Guns just need to be regulated better, not taken away." **Jailyn Baggett (11)**



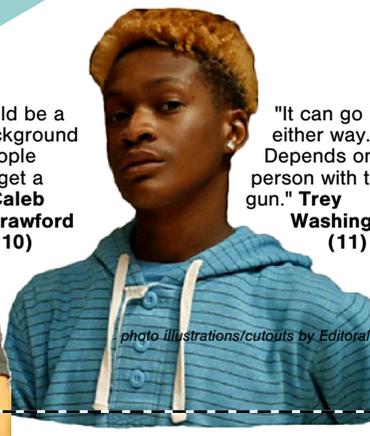
"People should be allowed to have guns! We need guns." **Sealy Pierce (11)**



"I think it's stupid. Guns are what is protecting us." **Sara Duncan (10)**



"There should be a required background check on people before they get a gun." **Caleb Crawford (10)**



"It can go either way. Depends on the person with the gun." **Trey Washington (11)**

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