

POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH


**MARCH
FOR OUR
LIVES** 

Topic At A Glance

All people want the same things: To earn, learn, and belong.

However, not everyone has access to the support needed to achieve this. National Poverty in America Awareness Month is observed each January by shining a light on one of the most pervasive and persistent problems in society. In recent years, observance has become more vital given the devastation in families and communities throughout the country due to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent economic upheaval.

Hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, disabilities, and restricted access to participation in the democratic process. These are just some of the many manifestations of poverty. More than 40 million Americans live in poverty, but we can eradicate poverty. As Nelson Mandela said, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the action of human beings."

Perry High School

This month a devastating shooting occurred in Perry resulting in two deaths and a shattered community. Lives were irreversibly changed and the emotional trauma from the event will scar the community for decades to come. Students like Perry Senior Ava Augustus were going about their regular school day when suddenly they heard shots ringing through the school. She and many others were unable to escape and had to lock themselves in a room. "And then we hear 'He's down. You can go out,'" Augustus said through tears. "And I run and you can just see glass everywhere, blood on the floor. I get to my car and they're taking a girl out of the auditorium who had been shot in her leg." Similar horror stories from other Perry students were common such as Rachael Kares, an 18-year-old senior, was wrapping up jazz band practice when she and her bandmates heard four gunshots, spaced apart "We all just jumped," Kares said. "My band teacher looked at us and yelled, 'Run!' So we ran." The stories of these and the thousands of other students at Perry are real examples of what a shooting does to the emotional and mental state of a community. Perry is a very large and diverse community with some of the highest rates of minority groups in the school. Unfortunately, many of the students are also not well off with 13% of students below the poverty line. The last thing these students should be worried about is being shot and the last thing parents need to be worrying about is their kid coming home alive. As members of the Iowa community, we need to stand with the Perry community and come together to put an end to gun violence.

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POVERTY AWARENESS MONTH**Topic's Relation to Gun Violence**

Across the US, gun homicide is startlingly common, and in some areas, it has become a fact of daily life. Too often, these most-affected areas are economically marginalized and racially segregated in inner-city neighborhoods. High poverty neighborhoods face increased rates of crime, creating an environment where gun violence becomes prevalent. A study conducted by Daniel Kim, an associate professor of social epidemiology at Northeastern's Bouvé College of Health Sciences, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, looked at the interaction of gun violence not only with social mobility but also with a host of factors, known as social determinants of health, including income inequality, trust in institutions, welfare spending, and racial and economic segregation. The study found that "increases in the neighborhood percentages of residents in poverty" were associated with a 27 percent higher rate of gun homicides. In addition, a study published in JAMA Pediatrics stated that young people are more likely to die from gun violence in places where poverty is more highly concentrated. It looked at around 68,000 gun-related deaths of people between the ages of 5 and 24 between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2016. Mapping gun violence onto county-level poverty levels, the researchers found that more than half of all gun-related deaths and two-thirds of firearm homicides affected victims who lived where a larger percentage of the population was living below the federal poverty line. Limited access to education and economic opportunities can contribute to a cycle of disadvantages, leading individuals to resort to crime, including use of firearms. Additionally, the lack of resources for mental health services increases the risk of violent incidents. Tackling gun violence requires addressing systemic issues like poverty, poverty for BIPOC communities, and economic inequality.

Current News

We are truly saddened to hear about the tragic incident in Perry, Iowa, and our hearts go out to the victims, their families, and the entire community affected by this senseless act of violence.

The recent school shooting underscores the urgent need for comprehensive gun violence prevention measures. Since 2013, 116 people have been killed and 172 injured by gunfire in 62 school shootings, according to a school shooting tracker NBC News is making public. As of January 18, 2024, it has been 14 days since the last major school shooting in our backyard: Perry, Iowa.

The events in Perry, Iowa, where a 17-year-old student was able to obtain and use two firearms, shed light on potential weaknesses in current gun policies. The fact that the principal, Dan Marburger, heroically tried to protect students at the cost of his own life is a stark reminder of the bravery educators display in the face of such crises.

This incident calls for a reevaluation of gun regulations to ensure responsible and safe firearm ownership. Stricter policies should be implemented to address the ease with which individuals, especially young ones, can access weapons. It's a collective responsibility to advocate for changes that prioritize community safety while respecting the rights of responsible gun owners.

In remembering Ahmir Joliff, the young life lost, and honoring the sacrifice of Principal Dan Marburger, let's channel our collective grief and shock into a renewed commitment to creating safer environments for our schools and communities.

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