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CONTACT

Abbey Clements, Sarah Lerner, Sari Beth Rosenberg
teachersunify@gmail.com

New Organization Seeks to Elevate Teacher Voices in Movement to End Gun Violence

*Teachers Unify, launched by three teachers with 70 years of combined classroom experience,
will advocate for educators to play major role in gun violence prevention*

Three public school teachers and American Federation of Teachers union members have formally launched **Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence**, a new initiative and the only national voice for educators, by educators, in the gun violence prevention movement. The scourge of gun violence affects children and families across the U.S. at an alarming rate and the founders, Abbey Clements (CT), Sarah Lerner (FL) and Sari Beth Rosenberg (NY), are raising the collective voices of educators on this issue.

“Young people who are victims and survivors of gun violence are enrolled in classrooms in every city and town in the U.S.,” **Abbey Clements** said. Clements is a survivor of the 2012 Sandy Hook School tragedy. “The struggles they and their families face are widespread—from ongoing medical needs, financial stresses, trauma, PTSD, and more. Add onto this the weight of a global pandemic that saw with it a 30% increase in firearm purchases.”

According to the [Children’s Defense Fund](#), gun violence is the leading cause of death for children aged 1-19. A child or teen is killed with a gun every two hours and 36 minutes, and Black children and teens are four times as likely to die by gun violence than their white peers.

Thousands of children each year are injured by and witnesses to gun violence, and millions live in homes with unsecured, unlocked firearms. Some children lose family members and friends to gun violence. The ripple effects can cause significant trauma and grief, significantly upend family situations and impact children’s learning and social experiences.

Sarah Lerner, a teacher at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, notes that, “Gun violence takes many forms: unintentional shootings, mass shootings, school shootings, homicides, police officer-involved homicides, suicides, domestic violence, threats with a firearm.” She continues, “We are a traumatized nation; the almost daily reporting on mass shootings, drills children and adults endure at school and in the workplace, open and concealed carry that contributes to a nation on edge, and a country with more guns than people. The effects of all of this on young people and their families are clearly evident. Who is there to help navigate these challenging times? Teachers.”

Just last month, Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy [issued a comprehensive report](#) on the state of children’s mental health in America that details the complex issues facing our youth. In the report, he states, “Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and young adults are real, and they are widespread.” Who is there to help navigate these challenging times? Teachers.

For years, teacher voices have been lost in the larger national dialogue around gun violence, and Teachers Unify seeks to fill that gap. **Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence** will amplify the stories and lived experiences of teachers and school staff across the country. These narratives will be shared with fellow educators through a wide range of tools and mechanisms to create a base of much-needed support and to share helpful resources.

“Our main job as teachers is to keep students safe,” **Sari Beth Rosenberg** said. Rosenberg is a teacher, writer, activist and public speaker from New York City. “This is a daunting task, especially when you teach in a country that refuses to take national legislative action on steps that have been proven to keep children and their families safe from gun violence.”

Teachers, school nurses, counselors, school psychologists, paraeducators, principals, and other school staff are first responders, the advocates for students and families, all while on the front lines of the gun violence crisis, this epidemic that is gun violence. According to **Sen. Chris Murphy** (D-CT), the gun violence prevention movement is, “...one of the great social change movements of this nation’s history and we can’t let failure or obstacles stop us.”

We at **Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence** envision this possibility for every school in the United States to truly be a safe haven and learning environment for every child.

If you would like to speak with someone from **Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence**, please reach out to the co-founders at teachersunify@gmail.com. *You may use any of the above information in your reporting.*

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About the Founders:

Abbey Clements is a survivor teacher of the Sandy Hook School tragedy in 2012, and elementary educator for 30 years. She has been a gun violence prevention activist, wearing many hats over the last near-decade, including as a Moms Demand Action volunteer leader (Deputy CT Chapter Leader, Survivor Fellow, National Training Team Lead, to name a few) and as a strategic consultant on gun violence issues for the AFT. She has been featured in various publications and documentaries, including [Newtown](#), [If I Don’t Make It, I Love You](#), [Bullets Into Bells](#), *Marie Claire*, *AFT Voices*, *USA Today*, among others.

Sarah Lerner is a survivor teacher of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School tragedy in 2018. Lerner has been teaching for 20 years, with the past eight at MSD. Lerner was the editor of “[Parkland Speaks](#),” has been published in [The New York Times](#), [The Atlantic](#), [Marie Claire](#), [New York Magazine](#), [The New Yorker](#), PBS NewsHour Extra and [AFT Share My Lesson](#), has appeared on [MSNBC](#), HLN, CNN, [PBS NewsHour](#), PBS Frontline, Good Morning Britain and NPR/WLRN and has been a keynote speaker for AFT, Council of Chief State School Officers, Florida Literary Assoc., Florida Assoc. of Colleges for Teachers and AFT Share My Lesson.

Sari Beth Rosenberg has been teaching U.S. History and AP U.S. History at a New York City public high school, the High School for Environmental Studies, for the past two decades and currently hosts the [PBS NewsHour Classroom Educator Zoom Series](#). Rosenberg has been featured in various publications and multimedia platforms, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Reuters, The Progressive, A+E/Lifetime, Travel Channel, TheSkimm, PBS NewsHour & various popular podcasts. She is a Senior Advisor for Voters of Tomorrow and One Million of Us.