

Emma Gonzalez, March for Our Lives

Six minutes, and about 20 seconds. In a little over six minutes, 17 of our friends were taken from us, 15 more were injured, and everyone, absolutely everyone in the Douglas community was forever altered. Everyone who was there understands. Everyone who has been touched by the cold grip of gun violence understands. For us, long, tearful, chaotic hours in the scorching afternoon sun were spent not knowing. No one understood the extent of what had happened. No one could believe that there were bodies in that building waiting to be identified for over a day. No one knew that the people who were missing had stopped breathing long before any of us had even known that a code red had been called. No one could comprehend the devastating aftermath, or how far this would reach, or where this would go.

For those who still can't comprehend, because they refuse to, I'll tell you where it went. Six feet into the ground, six feet deep. Six minutes and 20 seconds with an AR-15, and my friend Carmen would never complain to me about piano practice. Aaron Feis would never call Kyra "miss sunshine," Alex Schachter would never walk into school with his brother Ryan, Scott Beigel would never joke around with Cameron at camp, Helena Ramsay would never hang around after school with Max, Gina Montalto would never wave to her friend Liam at lunch, Joaquin Oliver would never play basketball with Sam or Dylan. Alaina Petty would never, Cara Loughren would never, Chris Hixon would never, Luke Hoyer would never, Martin Duque Anguiano would never, Peter Wang would never, Alyssa Alhadeff would never, Jamie Guttenberg would never, Jamie Pollack would never.