

STUFF

## We Went on a Historic Shark Dive with a Quad Amputee

**Mack Lamoureux**

Nov 13 2015, 5:58pm

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**Daniel Ennett, who has no arms or legs, travelled from Edmonton to Florida to prove he could swim with sharks. Just don't call him an inspiration.**



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It was just after 5 PM, when we heard our shark expert, Rochelle, call out "Hammer." She had spotted a hammerhead shark about 15 feet off the ship, and we had only a few fleeting seconds to get ourselves and our cameras into the water to capture the moment.

I scrambled to grab my scuba gear while across from me three men hurriedly helped Daniel Ennett into his wetsuit and scuba tanks and gingerly lowered him into the water. (He needs two people to lift him over the sides because of his disability.) Behind me, I heard a splash: A member of our group had jumped into the water wearing just his swim trunks and started toward the shark in what looked to be a hurried dog paddle.

"He's going to get himself fucking killed," I heard someone shout from the boat.

I threw on my mask and hopped into the water to catch up and send him back to the boat. Somewhere not all that far below us, an extremely agitated seven-foot hammerhead shark was attacking the chum line.

This was the moment we were waiting for, the very reason we'd travelled from Alberta to the Florida Keys: to bring Ennett face to face with a shark.

But it was also the moment that our dive master, Ken Holliday, had feared.

You see, Ennett has no arms no legs. He's essentially just a torso.

"Honestly, it freaks me out a bit," Holliday said the day before, while we sat around a Florida pool. "He looks like a chum bucket."

Ennett overheard Holliday's remark, then lowered his head and took a sip from the straw stuck in the beer balancing on his powerchair.

"He's got a point," Ennett replied, and broke into a deep laugh.

Videos by Mack Lamoureux

## 'SCUBA DIVING IS NOT A WHEELCHAIR SPORT'

A 22-year-old from Edmonton, Ennett has lived almost his entire life as a quadruple amputee. When he was five, he was diagnosed with Meningococcal Septicemia—a combination of Meningitis and Sepsis. The sepsis bacteria were making their way from his extremities toward his torso and if they'd reached his vital organs, the condition most certainly would have killed him. There was no real choice: To save his life, all four of Ennett's limbs had to be amputated.

Ennett has a shock of dark hair, an unkempt beard, and is perpetually sporting a pair of dark sunglasses. He's currently enrolled in his second year of psychology—focusing his research on perceptions of disabled people—and hopes one day to get his PhD. It only takes a few words with Ennett to realize that his disability isn't even close to being his defining characteristic.



One of the things that stood out to me during my time with Ennett was that he never passes up an opportunity. The plane scheduled to take

Ennett to Miami was delayed by a day, so he used that free time to get to a skydive centre and make his first jump. He's an intense guy. He enjoys himself some metal and is quick with a joke and a laugh; he reads philosophy (especially Jung, Carl and Rollins, Henry) and has an immensely dark sense of humour. When told that I would be outside the shark cage and for the dive, Ennett immediately perked up.

"If you lose a limb, I've got some tips for you."

His cousin, Jerimiah Harris, would be coming along as his full-time helper. Family is important to the two of them, something they told me time and time again. Watching the two of them interact on the trip was like watching a buddy cop movie. Harris would ask Ennett a question and it would almost always end in an inside joke.

Ennett has been working with Frederick Kroetsch and Kurt Spenrath at Open Sky Pictures for a few years now. The two produce an on-demand show called Invincible that finds Ennett regularly heading out of his comfort zone—the show has taken him skiing, mountain climbing, painting, curling, the list goes on. It's meant to show that adventures are still easily attainable by the physically challenged. By far the most popular episode was the one in which Ennett went scuba diving in a pool with the help of three other divers. This Florida trip would take that concept and run (or swim, as the case may be) with it.



Ennett in the water. Photos by Mack Lamoureux

"We thought it was kind of funny. It started as a joke," said Kroetsch. "He's a badass, but the idea of someone with no arms and legs swimming with a shark is a little absurd. It's a funny visual."

Ennett, ever up for a challenge, wholeheartedly agreed to the idea early this year and after consulting Ken Holliday, a renowned diver in Edmonton, Open Sky put together a team to try and pull off the arduous and seemingly bonkers task of getting a quadruple amputee open-water

scuba certified and then tossing him into the ocean with a shark.

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The film team consisted of Kroetsch, Spenrath, and Rebecca Campbell, a producer. Then there was the dive team, which consisted of three expert divers; Ken Holliday and Darrell O'Donnell, two good ol' Albertans boys; and Mark "Slinky" Slingo with Disabled Divers International. For Slingo, getting Ennett certified was a personal goal. When Slingo was a young man he fell three stories while drunk and broke his back, rendering him a paraplegic.

"Scuba diving is not a wheelchair sport. If you're a diver you're a diver," Slingo told me. "Disabled diving, yeah, you might need help to get on the boat and get off the boat but apart from that, you're in the water, you're a diver."

The group met in full for the first time at the Miami airport in late September and promptly headed down to the Keys. Palm trees lined a white sand beach, the ocean stretched out like infinity before us, and, for some reason, there were iguanas aplenty. A few rooms down from me, Slingo was hanging out in his wheelchair taking in the sights.

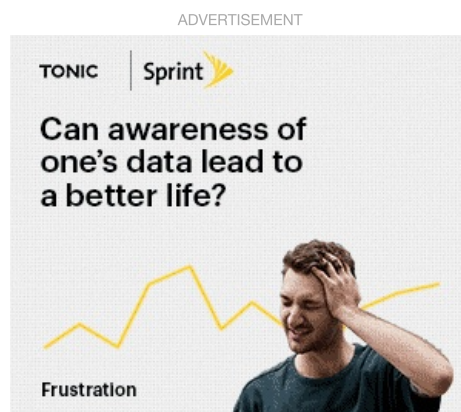
"Just another day at the office man," he told me. "Just another day at the office..."





## INTO THE DEEP

We made our way to Key Dives, a shop staffed by a man named Jason, who is, simply put, the best. Jason, who has a little dog that would ride on the back of his motorcycle, would say things like "alright, alright, alright" with a South Carolinian accent in complete sincerity. He would be our dive guide on Alligator Reef for the next two days.



Key Dives outfitted us as we made our first attempt to get Ennett certified. They had prior experience with physically challenged divers, and had certified a triple amputee some years ago, so they had the proper equipment and a handicap-accessible dive boat named the Giant Stride. As we made our way into the Atlantic I asked Ennett how he was feeling. He was uncharacteristically quiet for the boat ride there and looked almost pensive as we pulled up to the reef.

"I'm ready, strangely enough," he told me before turning to Holliday.

"Alright, let's get wet."

I threw on my gear, sank into the deep, and held a spot approximately 20 feet below the surface, looking up at Ennett as he entered the water. Up on the boat, Harris and a few helpers hoisted Ennett up and essentially dropped him into Holliday and O'Donnell's waiting hands. From there, the two would get Ennett in his full face mask and the rest of his equipment before slowly sinking lower into the water.

Everything seemed to be going well until Ennett got extremely sea sick. Like *The Exorcist* sick.

Initially, the sickness stemmed from being off his chair and on the boat, where he couldn't steady himself against the rocking motion, which was compounded by the fact that he couldn't equalize (pop his ears) underwater. Essentially, he couldn't go any lower than ten feet, and at that depth the surf is still relatively powerful, so he was being tossed around like a rag doll while the other two divers tried to stabilize him.



The sickness was viscous. But Ennett kept his nausea in check until Kroetsch got out of the water and steadied his camera so it could film him violently vomiting into a trash can.

"Apparently I'm the type of douche who gets seasick," Ennett said as we headed back to port, the day basically a bust. "That was the most nauseous I've ever been, and I've had some brutal hangovers. My body just started going numb, and I was actually having problems talking. I thought I was

getting the bends. My jaw was locking, and my tongue wasn't working."

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As we set out for the next day, the crew was worried: If Ennett couldn't dive here, he couldn't be certified, and if he wasn't certified, then there would be no shark dive. But Ennett was confident that they would get it done. It was all going to rely on the jerry-rigged nose plug they made in the pool the night before that would plug Ennett's nose, allowing him to pop his ears.

The day started as the last one had, with everyone getting in before Ennett and watching him get in the water. This time, the workaround worked and I watched as the three divers slowly sank to the reef and proceeded to swim towards the brightly colored fish and the muted coral. I swam up to the three and grabbed a picture of them. I saw Ennett's face and he looked happy taking in the sights, and then he started mouthing something.

"This is fucking rad."

I turned and got out of the way as the three embarked on what would be a history-making dive. Although not the first quadruple amputee to scuba dive, Ennett is the most severely physically challenged person ever to be certified by Disabled Divers International. Disability is a strange thing to quantify, but both Slingo and Holliday told me that no one like Ennett had ever done something like this.

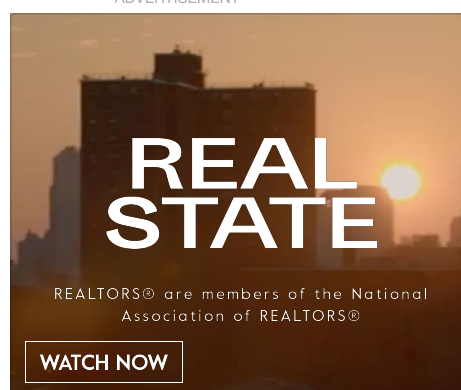




"In the pool, all I was looking at was the bottom of a pool," said Ennett of his previous attempts. "And the first time in the ocean, I was just trying not to die. [This time] we saw a moray eel—that was badass. Saw a few barracudas. It was like a guided tour, and I was just being dragged along. It was cool not being super paranoid about my head exploding, lung overexpansion, or some shit.

"You get under there, and it's a whole other world."

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Once we all pulled ourselves out of the water, we were jubilant. Everyone congratulated Ennett, and one of the dive masters from the other group diving that day came over to Ennett and told him he was "an inspiration."

Ennett cringed when he heard those words, but still smiled and offered a thank you.

**'I'M JUST OPERATING HERE'**

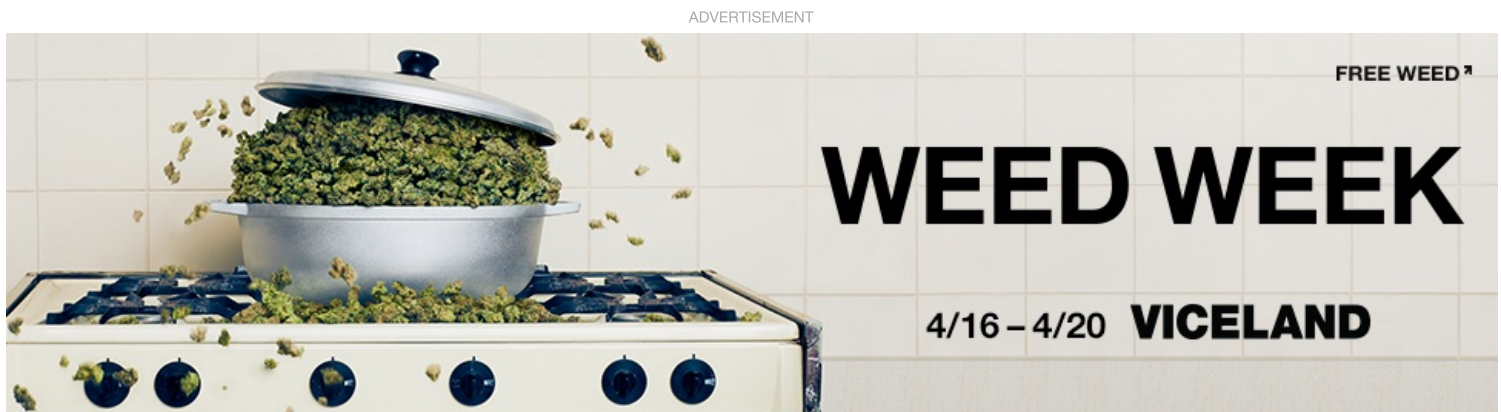


All his life Ennett has been called "an inspiration," and because of his show, he is hearing the term more than ever these days. That's thanks in no small part to the proliferation of what is known to some as "inspiration porn." The most common form is a well-intentioned meme or a brief viral video about someone with a disability overcoming some sort of adversity, typically packaged with nauseatingly sweet music that swells toward the climax.

The late Australian comedian, journalist, and disability advocate Stella Young **wrote** about the phenomenon in an essay for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"Let me be clear about the intent of this kind of inspiration porn; it's there so that non-disabled people can put their worries into perspective. So they can go, 'Oh well if that kid who doesn't have any legs can smile while he's having an awesome time, I should never, EVER feel bad about my life.' It's there so that non-disabled people can look at us and think, Well, it could be worse... I could be that person."

There is a weariness in Ennett's voice when he talks about people calling him an inspiration. He told me about a time about where a young woman came up to him and said, "Oh you're that inspirational young guy, aren't you?"



"I kept waiting for her to say that she saw me on TV or in one of the interviews I've done for a magazine," he said. "And she was like, 'No, you were walking down Jasper Ave.' I thought, what the fuck. I just get attributed with that even though I'm just functioning day-to-day and people are like 'you're an inspiration.'"

"I'm like, 'Nope, I'm just operating here. Heart's continuing to beat.'"

Ennett told me that it's difficult to put yourself in someone else's shoes when the jump is so massive. It's easy to look at someone with a disability and overlook the fact that there is a person there, that each and every disability and person has a unique back story and perspective. Ennett has learned that this is something he has to take in stride.

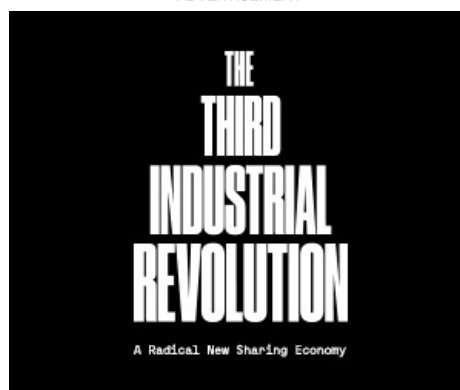


"It's not exactly insulting. It's endearing in a strange way," he said. "I mean, there's no basis for it, it's uncalled for, but I'm not going to lose it on them. I count my lucky stars that I never lost [my limbs] in an IED explosion or something. 'War veteran' is infinitely more tragic than my case, when it happened really young.

"I had the time to adapt to it, whereas if you're a soldier, and you're used to functioning with your limbs properly and one day when you're without. It's just a different situation."

But he is inspiring. And it's because he constantly pushes the boundaries of both himself and other people's perceptions. Early on in the trip I asked Ennett what he wanted to do in future seasons of the show.

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"I just want to see how far we can take it," he said.

"How far people will let us take it."

## 'WE'RE GOING TO NEED A BETTER BOAT...'

The day after Ennett's certification, we all found ourselves sitting around a table trying to plan how the hell to get Ennett in the water with some sharks. Who would have thought that getting someone to take a limbless man out on a shark dive would be so difficult?

The dive that we booked seemed to have some issues. The biggest and most pressing was that the cage was too small, and everyone other than Ennett and his dive team would simply have to be outside of the cage. I would be shark bait. Nevertheless, we headed out before daybreak and early the next morning found our guides Bryce and Rochelle waiting next to a boat that gave off the aura of the ill-fated fishing boat the Orca, from Jaws. It was just decrepit enough to feel like the proper boat for a shark dive.

Bryce, the ship's captain, talked in a deep baritone and looked like he had just finished chucking some weight to the sky, but I think that's who you want to have your back during a shark dive. His boat didn't have any sort of handicap accessibility, so Ennett and Slingo were ungracefully thrown from the edge of the dock onto the bow of the boat. After a few moments, we all got settled and started the journey that would take us three miles offshore, where it was legal to chum for sharks.

"There's a hurricane in the Bahamas," bellowed Bryce as we broke out of the marina. "So shit's going to get rocky, but we're just going to break right through it."



We made it through the intense waves to get to an area overtop a massive drop off—an area of the ocean where the land ends and the deep sea begins—and proceeded to fill a milk crate up with dead fish and their innards, attaching it to the boat via a string in the hope of attracting sharks. This was when we all got a good look at the cage. It was tiny and had a "viewing" hole on one side of the cage, and by that I mean the side

of the cage was more or less not there. I'm no cage expert, but in my limited experience a three-sided cage is more of a holding pen.



All of that seemed neither here nor there as the majority of the day proved relatively uneventful. Bryce and Rochelle did their best to attract the sharks, crinkling a water bottle underwater and slapping their fins against the surface to sound like a seal—but to no avail. There were other problems as well. The biggest was that the "cage" floated at the top of the water and tossed Ennett and the two divers around. Shortly after the first dive, O'Donnell, the man in charge of Ennett's buoyancy, got extremely ill and had to bow out. So this left Holliday as the sole diver with Ennett, who wasn't too happy with being kept in a cage while everyone was outside.

"That cage was a joke," he said after the dive. "The minute I heard everyone else was going to be snorkeling I was like, 'fuck that, this is bullshit.'"

So Holliday and Ennett abandoned the cage for the rest of the day but it didn't change the rotten luck. The group was minutes away from calling it a day when we heard Rochelle make the call that would define the entire trip.

"Hammer," she yelled, and we all proceeded to lose our shit in the least dignified way possible.

Hammerheads are a notoriously rare species of shark to dive with. Slingo has participated in over 4,000 dives and had never once seen a "unicorn of the sea." So when we heard that we might have the chance to dive with one, chaos erupted. There was no planning for an event like this. Tanks were knocked over, fins lost, people scrambling to get ready.

It was anarchy on our little boat.



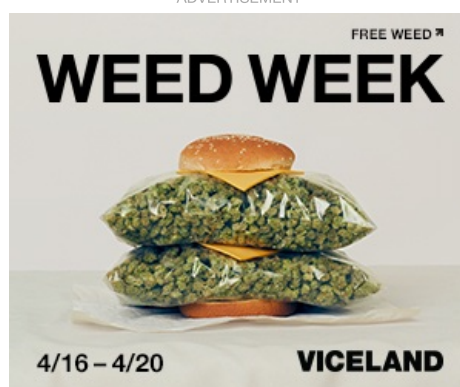


Our videographer was in the water first, followed by Ennett and Holliday. Everyone made an effort to enter the water slowly and gracefully, so as not to spook the shark. But when the videographer popped up saying his camera was dead, I heard the splash. Kurt Spenrath, the co-director, plunged into the water holding a camera, sans fins or a mask, desperately trying to get footage.

"Jesus Christ," Bryce yelled to me. "Go after him."

I threw on my mask and hopped over the edge, quickly catching up to Kurt. I took the stills camera out of his hand and sent him back. I turned and started my way toward Ennett and Holliday. I glanced back to see if Spenrath had made it and saw the hammerhead smoothly gliding along behind him. I don't know what the shark would've done if it caught up, but the thing did breach the water at the back of the boat moments after Spenrath was safely aboard. Bryce, the boat captain, shark expert, and dive guide, didn't get into the water.

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The shark spent about five minutes with us, close as can be, just circling and hitting the chum line. It was graceful. It was powerful. It was—as hammerheads are—extremely goofy looking. But overall it was, as Ennett said, "the coolest fucking thing in the world."

"Time was indiscernible to me because it was so fucking cool," he said.

"There was a point when I was, like, four feet away from the thing. It was circling with us, and Ken kept pitching us towards it and I was looking this beady eyed bastard in the eyes."

After hitting the chum line one last time, the shark swam downward into the black until it disappeared. Ennett, Holliday, and I hit the surface at the same time, and I swam over to the two of them. Both Ennett and I had big, stupid smiles on our faces.

"Fucking rights man, fucking rights," Ennett said.

I hit one of his stumps as a fist bump.

On the way back, while talking with Ennett about the experience as the sun set and the boat smashed over waves that had carried themselves to Florida from the destruction in the Bahamas, the two of us agreed that this is how schmaltzy-ass movies end.

The next day, however, came with some sober second thoughts. "That was extremely dangerous, you guys; we very easily could have died," Rebecca Campbell explained, after spending the night plagued by nightmares.

She was the only one on the trip with shark-dive experience. And according to her, the shark was clearly agitated. It was hunting—evident from the fact it was by itself; they only stray from the pod when they're hunting—and likely coming up from below to attack. In Rebecca's footage, the only shots that were usable, you can see the shark come up from below in a predatory way before it turns away at the final moment.

In the background, you can see Ennett and me bobbing up and down in the surf a few feet away—gleefully oblivious that we narrowly avoided a shark attack.



## EPILOGUE

We celebrated with some amazing stereotypical partying in Key West (including drunkenly visiting Ernest Hemingway's house), but it wasn't until a few weeks later when I met up with Ennett back in Edmonton that we really got to decompress.

He called the trip the best time of his life.

"It really opened my eyes to the world," Ennett told me. "It really showed me the expanse that is travel. Kind of turned me into an adrenaline junkie. I'm seeking out experience more now."

He's thankful to the group he describes as the "best-worst rag-tag band of Robin Hood-esque fuckwits that manage to fail forward" for the experience. On his back, he now sports a tattoo of a skydiving hammerhead.

"I guess now I have something to point to when someone calls me an inspiration," he said.

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Frustration



VEGANS

## Vegan Activists Still Very Pissed With Chef Who Butchered Deer, Ate Steak in Front of Them

Their demands include forcing the restaurant, Antler, to place an animal rights message in their window.



 Allison Tierney  
Apr 20 2018, 3:05pm



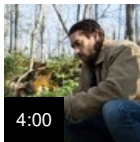


Screenshot via Facebook

A vegan activist group still hasn't let up on protesting outside of local Toronto restaurant Antler Kitchen & Bar.

The activists have now pledged to not halt protests until the restaurant posts the following oddly poetic message in its window, **BlogTO reports**: "Animals' lives are their right. In their desire to live and capacity to suffer, a dog is a pig is a chicken is a boy. Reject Speciesism."

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Watch: Behind the Burgers: Antler (Toronto)

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In late March, a video of Antler's chef Michael Hunter butchering a deer leg in front of a group of protestors standing outside of Antler's front window, surrounding the entrance of the restaurant.

"He's doing it deliberately to mock and taunt us because we're vegans," someone says behind-camera in the video. "As you can see, the owner has brought the leg of a recently murdered animal to the front of the restaurant to taunt the activists." Amidst the butchering, protestors hold a large black-and-pink banner that reads "MURDER" in front of the window, while more and more people look on.

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The chef disappeared in the back of the restaurant, came back with a cooked piece of meat, and chowed down in front of pissed off onlookers.

Police were even called to the protest to “keep the peace” and briefly talked to the chef. There were no arrests made.

Since then, media attention around the incident escalated, some vegans have decried that the activists hellbent on targeting Antler “don’t speak for all vegans,” and the protests outside of the restaurant have continued. Oh, and Hunter appeared on Joe Rogan’s podcast this Tuesday.

He told Rogan that the rift with vegans started in December after a vegan cyclist riding by took offence to a sign outside the restaurant proclaiming venison was “the new kale.”



“All of a sudden one day, these protesters showed up,” Hunter said. “Originally, I was kind of frustrated because they’re totally misguided... We take a lot of pride in where our food comes from; we have vegan and vegetarian dishes on the menu. I really respect that type of diet.”

Antler is a small restaurant located on Dundas Street West known for spotlighting regional ingredients. Hunter specializes in wild game. In a statement to the National Post, the chef said that Antler’s “identity as a restaurant is well-known throughout the city, as is our ethical farming and foraging initiatives.”

Hunter said on Rogan’s podcast that the protesters started showing up to the restaurant every week, growing in numbers and becoming increasingly agitated. He said they began shouting at customers and in their door in what he said was an effort to harm their business. “I just kind of got fed up,” Hunter explained to Rogan. “I just said screw it, I’m going to get these people out of here.”

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The same group of vegan activists have protested fast food chains in the city, such as KFC and McDonald’s. In an April 12 Facebook event, the group says Antler “is an important place to educate on speciesism.” Speciesism is an animal rights term concerning discrimination between

species—that is, favouring one over another.

The organizer of the event wrote on its description that Antler is a key place to “educate on speciesism” because “the public sees the chef as the victim, rather than the animals being killed and eaten.”

So will Antler’s chef agree to post the animal rights activists’ message about speciesism in his window?

"We're not going to, there's no way," he said on Rogan’s podcast, "but that's what they want."



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# I'm a Teen from Newtown Who's Fighting for Gun Control

Jenny Wadhwa was in sixth grade when a gunman attacked Sandy Hook Elementary and murdered 26 of her friends and neighbours.



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TWEET

Jenny Wadhwa

Apr 20 2018, 2:30pm

The author participates in a protest at the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). All images courtesy Jenny Wadhwa

I know the feeling of helplessness wrought by a headline. Then two headlines. And, before you know it, even more: 26 dead in massacre at elementary school; gunman kills nine at church Bible study; active shooter has YouTube headquarters on lockdown.

The shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary changed me. I live in Newtown, Connecticut, the small picturesque town that used to be known for its incredible ice cream, not mass murder. On December 14, 2012, the day of the attack, I was in sixth grade at Reed Intermediate School, which is down the road from Sandy Hook. But I still feel its repercussions. I'm in high school now, and instead of prom and SAT prep, I'm thinking about gun violence prevention. Celebrating my Sweet 16 feels wrong when I could be planning forums and writing speeches.

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I didn't choose this path, but when you lose a friend or see the impact of murder on a community, you have no choice but to do something. The shooting at Sandy Hook killed my neighbors and friends. It had me scared for my life for five hours and made me feel like the world was my enemy.





The author's sixth grade yearbook photo

I will never forget the tone of the principal on the loudspeaker when he told us to “get into lockdown.” Our teacher beckoned us in a hushed tone to get under the computer desks in the corner and stay quiet. We sat under those desks playing hand games for what seemed like forever.

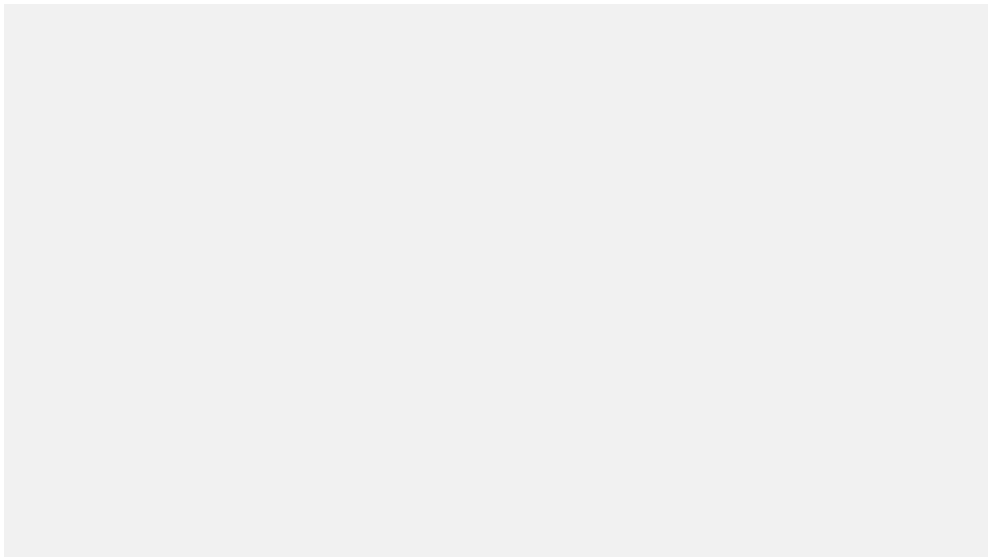
The cell phone in my teacher’s pocket rang endlessly. When he finally decided to answer it, he was told what was happening three miles down the road at Sandy Hook Elementary. The look on his face told us we had something real to be afraid of. When we were finally allowed to leave, a barricade of teachers shielded us from the open hallway.



**Read: Sandy Hook Families Are Still Fighting**

My mom was waiting outside. I’d never seen her cry like that before. We spent the rest of the afternoon calling our friends to check that their younger siblings at Sandy Hook made it home. For 20 families whose children were gunned down, the answer was unimaginable. They never got to grow up, never hugged their moms again like I did.

My peers and I have been dubbed the “Mass Shooting Generation.” I hate that label, because it defines us by what's being done to us instead of what we are actually doing: demanding change. Teenagers all over the country are sick of waiting for legislators to keep us safe. We’re taking gun control into our own hands.



The author (left) at a vigil for Parkland

After Sandy Hook, I felt compelled to do anything—no matter how small—that might make a difference. My sister and I organized bake sales around the country to raise money for the Newtown Memorial Fund. As 11-year-olds, selling cupcakes in front of Walmarts made us feel like we were taking action—and helped us heal a tiny bit.

My high school, Newtown High, is like any other: kids are busy with homework, sports, clubs, and jobs. But we're also trying to chip away at our own feeling of helplessness by giving back. We write **letters to other victims** of school shootings to make them feel less alone. It sounds cheesy, but a handwritten note to a grieving teen—or a note to demand action from a member of Congress—can have a huge impact.

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We're also working to change gun laws through the **Junior Newtown Action Alliance**. The most tangible way to enact legislation is to get people to vote. We're working so kids like me, who are still too young, can automatically get a voter registration form on their 17th birthday.



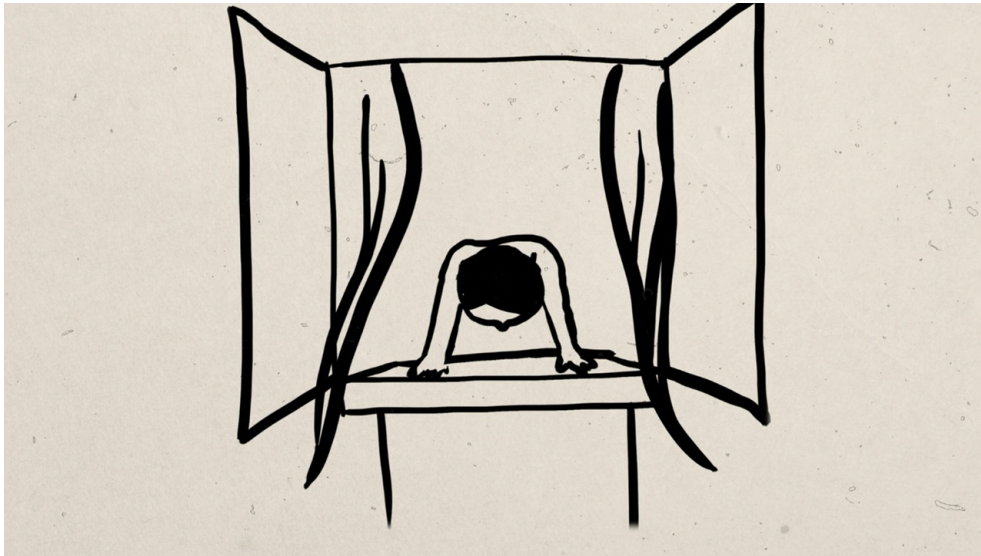
**Read: These School Shooting Survivors Have Something to Say**

Another aspect of our work with the Junior Newtown Action Alliance is raising awareness. One committee is filming videos of students recounting their Sandy Hook stories. A few friends and I are working on an Instagram page called @HumansOfNewtownCT to put a face on the impact of gun violence and show how one AR-15 affected so many more people than those who were actually struck by bullets. I believe if we can get the world to empathize with us, the opposition will have no choice but to listen.

It feels like we are finally beginning to move forward. The fact that this is becoming a national issue instead of one that's clustered around small towns and groups of people who feel uniquely affected is huge. It seems

like America is finally on our side—and that factions of gun violence prevention movements are unifying. The baby steps we were making before are becoming big leaps.

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Now I'm interning at **The Avielle Foundation**, founded by the parents of Avielle Richman, a girl who was murdered at Sandy Hook. They're studying the science behind violence and compassion to try to understand what drives people to kill.

But beyond understanding why these things happen, I wanted to be capable of literally saving lives. I decided to become an EMT, and for five months, in four-hour adult classes, three nights a week, I learned how to be a **first responder**. For what it's worth, this was well before Rick Santorum absurdly suggested teaching children to perform CPR on wounded friends as a way to reduce casualties from school shootings.

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Moving forward, teens need to continue to put pressure on politicians who are taking money from the NRA. We need to keep exposing them, because it could have a tremendous impact on the way people vote. We also need to keep sharing our stories. This issue is so much more widespread than people think. By combining our efforts with teenagers from Chicago and Harlem, we can amplify our voices that much more.

The author (center) with other teens protesting at NRA Headquarters



**Read: Parkland Has Already Changed America**

I had the pleasure of meeting Aalayah Eastmond, a student from **Marjory Stoneman Douglas High**, and Ramon Contreras, a student from Harlem, at a protest at **NRA Headquarters** last week. They are organizing a Youth Over Guns march in New York City on June 2 to raise awareness of gun violence in communities of color and nationally. We are hoping for a large turnout to really take a stand and give places that get overlooked by the media a chance to tell their stories.

In Newtown, we're still scared. We had a fire drill today, and even though it was scheduled, I felt a flash of panic and thought to myself, "In Parkland, he pulled the fire alarm to get students out of their classrooms." My apprehension to walk into the hallway and out of the school, is not exclusive to me—it's felt all across America. What people need to realize is that we're not scared of mental illness or unarmed guards, we're scared of guns and inaction. We need to come together and do something about gun violence now, before another community is torn apart and another town becomes known for mass murder.

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