

# MILA VAN WEELDEN

\* Writing Portfolio  
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## Writer Biography

As senior class president, the newspaper editor, and an involved student, I have used the platform I have to shine light on big issues affecting my peers and our society and given voice to topics and people that often go overlooked.



# No safe places

By: Mila Van Weelden @milavanweelden

The bright-eyed, excited-about-life eight-year-old tosses her favorite pink backpack over her shoulder as she dashes through the door to the yellow bus. She finds a seat next to her best friend since kindergarten while they discuss in detail how they will spend their time at recess that day, as that is the most crucial information that could be on the brain. What she doesn't know is that before she gets a chance to swing on the brand-new swing set, slide down her favorite slide, and play a game of tag that gets a tad too intense, she will have to hide in a closet while an active shooter is murdering her friends. And that is what it is like to go to school in America.



Children are getting continuously carried out in body bags, and as a society, we have begun to become desensitized. It is not okay, and action must happen.

Children get killed, we give out thoughts and prayers, we have a mini uprising on social media, then we proceed on with our lives as though gun violence is not the leading cause of death amongst children in the United States. On top of the fact that many enjoy brushing aside, The Washington Post reports that over 349,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since 1999. That is 349,000 lives that will be changed forever, 349,000 students that will never see school the same, and 349,000 people that will most likely flinch at any loud sound until they leave this earth. However, change is still yet to come. According to BBC, not only have there been more mass shootings than days in 2023, but for the last three years, there has been a 600 per year average. The news turns on each morning and the likelihood that there was some sort of shooting overnight is exorbitant, but each person hears the same "it's a second amendment right" argument ad nauseam.

The second amendment that people are laying down others' lives to protect was written in 1791. According to Gilford's Law Center, 85% of mass shootings today are done with automatic weapons, yet author David Grace states that in 1791, one couldn't use a gun without training, they could only fire once every thirty seconds, and a crazy person could only kill one person at a time. In 1791, the weaponry that is present in today's society was unfathomable. Therefore when it was written, it was most likely not written to protect your fast-firing, killing machines. However, most of us are not asking for the second amendment to be stripped, rather make it so that an 18-year-old can't walk into a firearm store and buy an automatic weapon with little to no steps to make it difficult.

After the Uvalde, Texas school shooting, the House Judiciary Committee met to propose a set of bills promptly titled, "Protect Our Kids Package," according to the Vox. In this, they suggested that the age be moved from 18 to 21, the banning of Bump Stocks, the requirement of safe gun storage for homes with children, and other various bills that would essentially save lives. Sadly, this package did not move far in the Senate, but this is precisely the type of bill that would make it a tad easier for a mother to send her child to school every day.

I have always wanted children, but I will simply not bring another life into this cruel, corrupt world without at least trying to change it first. As a 16-year-old, my voice matters little to none, but I will continue to fight for all of the people that can't fight for themselves. I will fight for those killed, and I ask that everyone else opens their eyes and gives those people a voice too.

# Step back

Mila Van Weelden, Editor

January 11, 2024



# Proving we can show love

By: Mila Van Weelden @milavanweelden

I am a Christian. I am one of those humans who loves Jesus, goes to church and church camp, follows the Bible, and does all of the other God-related activities that one might assume takes place in a Christian's life. I am a kind, loving-of-all-people person, and because of how my culture has treated certain groups of society, that fact about myself is one of the biggest shocks of all. I am a Christian, and those four words alone can spark feelings of love and admiration or disgust and hate, and that divide is detrimental to religion and society alike.



Christianity today is full of grey area. Looking at the 1,200 pages of the Bible translated multitudinous times in numerous languages leads to misinterpretation left and right. What one church decipherers as a certain meaning could be the exact opposite as the one not a block away. In theory, this wouldn't create as big of a problem as it does. Why would the deduction matter if the morals of the people practicing the religion are the same or if everyone had a general understanding of the Bible's main teachings? The problem is that they don't, and that's where issues arise.

Christianity is a religion full of all stereotypes. For some, it is a genuine shock to find out I am a Christian since I try to be the kindest

many people as one can. Many of the assumptions, negative and positive, would be cleared up if every Christian wholeheartedly, faithfully, and truly followed that phrase. Loving one's neighbor is quite simple in that it does not matter who they are, where they come from, or what their background is, but one loves first. I don't see much of that anymore.

Hate is spewed left and right by the same ones who say they follow Jesus's teachings. A person will go up to others who are simply loving who they want to love and tell them that they are going to burn in Hell, will spit on them, verbally and physically assault them, and then make their way to church the next Sunday and be told how perfect of a human they are. There, they are praised for their actions, as it is seen as somehow "saving" these people. The cycle repeats itself until eventually, those who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community won't touch churches with a ten-foot pole. According to Public Discourse, the percentage of Americans who identify as Christian has dropped from 75% to 65%, and the percentage of people who don't believe in any religion has grown from 17% to 26%.

With this I ask, how is this helping? How is turning others away solving issues? In my mind, the answer is it's not. It is not

A group of people stand together in protest to show that even though they are Christian, they love every person equally.

# Change the cruelty

Mila Van Weelden, Editor

February 21, 2024



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# Abstract idea

By: Mila Van Weelden @milavanweelden

The average, typical life of an average, one constant throughout are the burdens that weigh on most people. Almost everyone has some sort of responsibility, stress, or albatross that makes their life that much more difficult, but not too often do we think about what stressors we force on ourselves. What barriers we create to stop ourselves from success. For me and many others, having a firm grasp on everything around us, having control of the uncontrollable, gives us a false sense of security. Control is a short fix to usually long-term issues, and that need and want of ascendancy can do more harm than good.

Many people, in leadership positions especially, have to learn how to let go. That can be letting go of a small mistake, a comment made, or even just trusting those whom one is leading. From personal exper-

Many of us overthinking, anxiety-prone people that just want to do well in this world have a plethora of support from all directions. It is possible that most of the humans we try to show off all this tenacity to already think the world of us. We can hand over some of the control we think we need and let life run its course a bit. Trust in the people that trust in you, and know that they are usually there to offer a helping hand. One crucial thought to remember is that taking the hand does not make us less-than. It does not mean that we couldn't have done it all on our own; it means that we are allowing our life to be a little easier when the same product will be produced in the end. You should not feel guilty for taking what's offered. Even as these words are appearing on the page, I am using them to remind me of what I constantly forget. Not only will it make our lives easier, it may just teach someone a new skill that they didn't have. They can then teach more people, and all of a sudden, your support system has removed one of the many stressors in your life.



As a society, many long for the feeling or the sense of control. In reality, there is very little one can do to achieve that goal.

rience, trying to guide a group of people toward a common goal without wanting to do it all myself poses quite a challenge. When I know how to do it and how to do it correctly, it is hard to see the value of outside help. When I am past my breaking point and can't physically do any more, I still want to take it on personally to prove that I can. That I am strong. Though, the real showcase of strength comes from when I step back, take a breath, and let the many people that try and take some of the weight off my shoulders do just that.

Although, there are times when said support system is trying to alleviate some mental pain, but they just don't know how. They use words like "control freak" or say, "just relax," thinking that will be the magic fix to whatever we have going on in our heads. To those in the corner of someone who carries the world on their shoulders, I ask to give a little grace. I may not be a famous philosopher with all the knowledge at my fingertips, but I do know what it's like to try and do everything myself, physically not knowing how to accept assistance. Most of the time, we are trying to do it for the sake of everyone else, and when we think people hate us for doing that, it can put us in a negative mind loop that we sometimes can't escape.

I end this by saying control is an abstract idea. One can never truly be in control of all aspects of their life, nor should one try. Life throws so many obstacles that if we as a society place even more unnecessary tasks on our plate, we won't be truly living. Like I said before, step back, take a breath, and know that you don't have to do it on your own.