

I'm a Student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Here are the Questions I Wish You'd Stop Asking Me.

BY REBECCA SCHNEID MAR 23, 2018



Since 17 people were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School last month, a new coalition has emerged to demand gun control. Led by students, the movement has woken Americans up to the realities of gun violence—and joined black activists who've raised awareness around these issues for years.

Of course, with intense media attention, comes hundreds of questions from reporters, some insightful and effective and many less so. Rebecca Schneid, a junior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the editor-in-chief of the Eagle Eye, the student newspaper, shares four questions she wishes reporters would retire. Journalists and adults of all stripes, consider this a PSA.



Don't ask about the shooter, because I've had that asked to me. That's not something that we want to focus on, because I think it'll attract more attention to him. He's had enough.

We've heard about what happened a lot, and I think it's important to place emphasis on what we're doing now. A better question to ask is, "How has what happened to you affected your commitment to this?" I'm a journalist, so I know that's a good story. It's a really good story to talk about how that emotional impact has driven people to feel that it is important to march, and it's important to become politically engaged. Ask us about that.

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Ask, "What do you feel like you're doing? What are your intentions? What is your end goal? What do you hope to get that comes out of this?"—those are all really good questions. "What do you plan on doing in the future after the march?" Ask us that, because we have plans.

"Tell me what happened that day."

Some of us don't like to talk about what happened. For me, I'm fine with it; I think it just depends on the person. If you want to know, or you think it's important, ask, "Would you like to share a story?" That's being straight up. We just want you to be honest. "Are you comfortable enough talking about your story?" If someone says no, then that's a no. And if they say yes, great. I think it's fine to ask those questions but not just go to, "Tell me what happened that day," because some people don't like to revisit it.

"Did you know anybody that passed away or was hurt?"

Especially reporter; it's like, "Are you relevant?" "Will people feel bad for you?" We're all survivors. We're all relevant.

"Will politicians really listen to teens?"

Don't ask us. Ask them. Ask people in office, "What are you going to do? What specific policies and specific laws will you support or propose to make sure you are doing right by your constituents, who obviously overwhelmingly support some reform.

Even gun owners understand the power of guns, and so many of them want to be responsible gun owners. I think it's important to ask for specifics. It's not just, "Do you support gun control?" We have to start asking, "Would you propose this bill?" Or, "Would you support a bill that includes this language? Would you support this specific amendment?" Because if you make it specific, they have to give a yes or answer. It becomes harder for them to weasel their way out of it the way, that politicians usually do. Ask them, "Are you the kind of person who doesn't support banning semi-automatic weapons with high velocity rounds?" Make them feel the pressure.

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