



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
NATIONAL AGENDA 2021
REFLECTING AMERICA

“A Generation’s Voice”
with David Hogg

HOSTED BY University of Delaware
Center for Political Communication
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David Hogg Survivor of one of the largest school shootings in American history, David Hogg became an activist with a compelling voice of his generation. David attended Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida where on February 14, 2018, a lone teen gunman entered the school and sprayed bullets from a high-powered military assault rifle. David lost 17 of his friends, classmates and teachers to the shooting. As a high school senior David called to “get over politics and get something done” which immediately thrust him in the national and international media spotlight. Committed to becoming an agent for change, he resolved that no other young person should have to experience the tragic impact of gun violence. He joined with friends from high school to co-found March For Our Lives, now one of the world’s largest youth-led movements. Five weeks after the shooting, March For Our Lives mobilized one of the biggest demonstrations in the nation’s history.¹

Transcript of Event

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[Musical interlude to 0:00:34.5]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Please welcome your host for this evening, Dr. Lindsay Hoffman.

DR. HOFFMAN: Good evening. Thank you everyone for being here. It's great to welcome you all to the 11th Annual National Agenda Speaker Series. We are here thanks to the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication as well as the Department of Communication, the Office of the Provost, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Division for Student Life. This year's theme is "Reflecting America." How is this historic era in our country's history with its political divides, social movements, and economic upheavals not to mention a global pandemic redefining who we are as Americans? We have access to so much information, but it seems like we can't even agree on the basic facts, much less hear viewpoints that are different from our own. That's what we do here at National Agenda; we learn from each other about how to communicate effectively across differences, how to disagree without being disagreeable, how to turn talk into action. We've already spoken with Appalachian novelist, novelist David Joy and NPR White House correspondent Asma Khalid about religious and geographic divides facing the nation and how we got here. We heard from two friends on opposite sides of the political spectrum who managed to have civil conversations by engaging in active listening. And most recently we spoke with journalist Eric Michael Garcia who recently published the book **We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism**



Conversation. All those videos are available at our website:

cpc.udel.edu/nationalagenda. Tonight, is our fourth of six events this Fall, and we'll be inviting audience participation. So, just click on the Q and A in the bottom of your Zoom for, to ask a question. And even though most of us are joining virtually there is a group of students at Mitchell Hall – hi guys – who are at a watch party and who I've promised to get a cookie on their way out. They will also be able to ask questions of the speaker. I'll give your instructions on that, how to do that during the Q and A. So, tonight, without further ado, David Hogg was thrust into the world of activism after one of the largest school shootings in American history in Parkland, Florida. On February 14th, 2018, a lone gunman who just today pleaded guilty to the premeditated murder of 17 people and the attempted murder of 17 others, he will either spend his life in prison or face execution. The then high school senior's call to "get over politics and get something done" placed him in the, into national and international media spotlight immediately. He then cofounded March For Our Lives, now one of the world's largest youth led movements. Five weeks after the shooting March For Our Lives mobilized one of the biggest demonstrations in the nation's history and Hogg has since become a compelling voice of his generation. With his younger sister, Lauren, he, also a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, he co-wrote **#NeverAgain**, a *New York Times* best-seller. David and Lauren also contributed to the best-selling book, **Glimmer of Hope: How Tragedy Sparked a Movement**, a compilation of writings of the founders of March For Our Lives. He's now a student at Harvard University where he joys, joins us today in between classes. And finally, I want to mention, he also wrote the foreword to another one of our National Agenda speakers, John Della Volpe, just published a



book called **Fight – How Gen Z Is Channeling Their Fear and Passion to Save America**. So, please join me in giving a big Blue Hen welcome to David Hogg.

DAVID HOGG: Thanks for having me.

DR. HOFFMAN: Hi, David.

DAVID HOGG: Hey.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, you're in between –

DAVID HOGG: I just –

DR. HOFFMAN: – classes?

DAVID HOGG: – [indiscernible] – yes, basically. It's a very – as, as I'm sure many students can relate, its midterm season right now here so it's a bit chaotic. But, yeah, I just want to say thank you so much for having me, Dr. Hoffman, and thank you to the University of Delaware for, for having me come and speak.

DR. HOFFMAN: Sure. It's, it's a, really a pleasure to have you here. Some of our students have been asking for you to come speak. You clearly have had an impact on students in your generation in terms of giving them hope and giving them feelings of power and efficacy that they can get something done. So, we'll talk; have our conversation I had some questions for you, and we'll wrap up with a Q and A at the last half hour. So, let's start with the news that came out today. So, according to The New York Times the former student who waged a deadly attack against his classmates and teachers in Parkland, Florida in 2018 pleaded guilty on Wednesday to the premeditated murder of 17 people and attempted murder of 17 others leaving his fate either spending his life in prison or facing execution in the hands of a jury. What are your reactions to this news today?

DAVID HOGG: You know, [sigh] it, I, I feel complicated about it because on one hand I'm, I'm happy that things are moving forward in that this chapter of our, I guess, any effort that we can make towards any form of closure is at least this part of it is coming to a close. But, the reality is, you know, when we went out there I've been thinking a lot especially in the past couple of days about when they were starting. You know, we went out there and we told the adults to do their jobs. We said, get over politics and get something done. We said, you know, we're, we're the young people and we were, you know, teenagers at the time when we said we need you to protect us. And if you don't we're going to, we're going to go out and vote. And that's what we did. We did vote at the, one of the highest rates in American history in 2018 and the highest rate ever in 2020 for young people. Right? And what we're seeing now is just a constant stagnation in part because of the filibuster and in part because of, of course COVID and other public health crises facing the country right now. But, you know, I, I'm happy that things are moving forward and that there is some form of justice being brought, of course. But ultimately I don't think real closure is ever fully possible because there's nothing that could ever bring my classmates that, there's nothing that I could ever bring my classmates and people's siblings and their children and, you know, moms and dads, you know, all the people that have been affected by this that, that will ever make it better for them.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's understandable. Well, so, you have been a, a target by people in Congress, by media as someone who at the time was just 18 years old. How, how were you able to deal with that kind of attacks on, on social media? I mean, you even have Marjorie Taylor Greene followed you in, in a video of, in March from the, from March 2019 followed you as you walked towards the Capitol. She can be heard making false claims as she asks you questions, and you continue to

walk without answering her. She has called you “Little Hitler” I believe or is that Lauren Boebert? Um –

DAVID HOGG: It’s one of them probably.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, how, how did you react in the aftermath because that video came out of you having been in a news story in California which led people to believe that somehow you were a, an actor and this wasn’t, you weren’t really even at, living in Florida. So, how did you as just a normal teenager deal with that kind of backlash right away. Do you think it’s something about your generation being more accustomed to cyberbullying or, or was it, did it really impact you?

DAVID HOGG: You know, I, I would, like, when I was 17 and all of this started to happen when I was in high school, you know, I told myself, like, whatever, like, I, I have more important things to do, and I just wasn’t paying attention to it. And I, sometimes you’ve just got to laugh this stuff off because it’s so ridiculous. But also, it’s, it’s not a laughing matter and that my, you know, my, I’ve gotten hundreds, probably thousands of death threats at this point in the mail and sent to my school for me, you know? And not to mention the threats that my family have gotten. You know, my house has been swatted. I’ve gotten, you know, when we were on tour there were people that would send, basically sent, sent in death threats and we would have to change our events and things like that because of that. And we were literally just teenagers that didn’t want our friends to be shot anymore. And I, I think the really, the really bad thing about it is, one of the worse things about it is that it, it, it’s almost like a form of psychological warfare that was waged against us because it was, you know, trying to tell people that, like, we’re not real, that what we did, what we went through wasn’t that big of a deal. And what, you know, or that it didn’t

happen. So, honestly, I don't really know how I dealt with it. I think part of it was we were just so busy at the time that we couldn't focus on it. I think the other thing that we did also was, you know, laugh at it when possible because of how absurd it is, if that's even possible. And, and the other thing is that just realizing how much it plays into people's hands because we see again and again, for example, when there's, even though self-defense gun use is exceedingly rare in the United States in comparison to gun suicides and unintentional shootings where, you know, a child gets access to a gun and is playing with what they think is a toy or something like that, even though self-defense gun use is all right, ah, it's, it's much more likely to be unsuccessful than successful. We see the, the NRA, FOX News, these rightwing media outlets anytime there is a self-defense gun use that is successful publish that story everywhere. Meanwhile, when we're trying to talk about facts and statistics, as we learned in our speech and debate classes and stuff, you know, it's easy to bit, to debate with statistics, right, and say that those facts are wrong. It's impossible to say that that instance of self-defense gun use didn't happen though right? And that's what they realize with us. They realize that if you are always telling people, if your main strategy to prevent gun control or gun reform from passing is to tell people that they can't talk about these things because they are politicizing tragedy. When you have those young people go out from a shooting and say that we need to change these things what do you, you can't say to them that they're politicizing their own tragedy after their classmates died. So, what do you do in the case of the NRA, you start peddling these insane conspiracy theories that were owned by, you know, these anti-, these anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists that were owned by Jewish billionaires and things like that and try to get, make people believe that we aren't real or that we're paid actors, or that, you know, somehow we weren't in the shooting,

right? I've seen clips of myself from interviews that I did in the wake of the shooting spread like wildfire that are purposely and intentionally edited to make it sound like I say that I wasn't at school that day even though I was. I was literally in a classroom interviewing my classmates not knowing whether or not we were going to make it out alive. So, it's deeply frustrating because we just want the country to move forward on this because we don't, we believe that this shouldn't be a partisan issue.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, so, my students, and you'll get, get to meet them next week fortunately but one of the books we're reading this semester is Jonathan Haidt's The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion

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DAVID HOGG: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and it's, I think you're absolutely that sometimes, you know, you can see all the statistics and, and give all the facts but people are often motivated by emotion rather than reason. And they're motivated by long-held, long-standing beliefs. And does it ever feel like you are [indiscernible] just pushing, pushing that, that this idea up the hill and it, it, like, does it ever feel hopeless or do you, how do you make sure that you, you don't feel hopeless?

DAVID HOGG: I think realizing that I'm not alone in this fight. And this fight has been going on way, way before Parkland happened. Right? I think of people like Erica Ford in New York City who had been working for over two decades in Jamaica, Queens to stop daily gun violence from happening. You know, I think about especially the black and brown women that have done this work and really have created, enabled us to do this work at all not any amount of success that we have had because the legacy of the work that they've created and continue to do on

a daily basis. And I, I think that's part of what gives me hope and knowing that, again. I'm not alone in this fight. If I need to step out, you know, I know Fred Gutenberg, for example, or Manuel Oliver both, both of whom are parents that lost their children in the shooting, you know, they're going to be doing the work because nothing is ever going to stop them, right? And they know that if they need to step out then I'll be able to step in because I'm taking care of myself. So, I think that's been one of the, the way that we keep pushing that, you know, that rock, that boulder, you know, up again and again and again is by not letting all the weight fall on any one of us. It's shared by all of us. And if we need to step back and, you know, take a break for a second we know that we can because there are going to be those other people pushing every single day with it. So that, that's probably how I would say, even though it does feel like that, that we keep up that sustainability by working together.

DR. HOFFMAN: And there, another part of Jonathan's book is, emphasizes sort of how we, when we can turn on what he calls the hive switch which turn us into worker bees who work together for each other we can accomplish incredible things. And it seems like you guys are kind of always ready to turn that switch on to be, be with each other together, united. So, one of the themes of, of this, this speaker series and more generally what the Center for Political Communication does is examines how we can engage in civil discourse. So, you've just given some examples of how people are editing media or who are falsifying information in, in, in, to better their arguments. But there is a, a, a magazine, a *New York Magazine* article where, called "David Hogg After Parkland" that I had my students read before class today. And so, Margo asked the question in the, the interview you mentioned that you had a run-in with a pro-gun activist who asked you if you and your fellow activists actually wanted to take away guns and by the end of the conversation, you

and the man were shaking hands. Are you able to address most conversations with people who disagree like this and what are some of the tools you use to keep your cool when talking to people who are coming at you with a very diametrically opposed viewpoint?

DAVID HOGG: Well, I think an important thing to acknowledge is that, you know, I have a lot of privilege, an enormous amount of privilege to even be able to have those conversations being, you know, a white cis heterosexual male. And, I would say that although it's, when possible it, it's great to have those conversations you're not going to convince everybody, right? It, it's not, it shouldn't be on the survivors of gun violence to go out and talk to armed protestors who are wielding the same weapon that killed 17 of my classmates and teachers. It shouldn't be on us to have that conversation and frankly I don't think we have a responsibility to, responsibility to have it in the same way that they don't have a responsibility to have it with us. You know, we can work this thing out in the courts, and we can work this thing out in our state legislatures because ultimately when we have this thing called voting that doesn't require us to talk to the other side. And even though I would love to have a more productive conversation. The fact of the matter is I'm not going to talk about, you know, a, a, a talking point that says that the shooter at my high school was mentally ill and that's why he did what he did when he very clearly was more than anything anti-Semitic, a racist and xenophobic. You, you can see in, unfortunately, the documents that I've been shown repeatedly, you know, by people and had to look at and think about why this happened – this person wasn't necessarily the crazy, they were somebody that was full of hate and someone that was able to get an AR-15, right? And I, I think in that conversation, for the record, that I didn't, what we didn't realize at the time in that conversation was that it was a

group of Proud Boys that we were talking to because I was 18. Had I known that I wouldn't have had that conversation because I don't want to give a platform to those people in any way, shape or form. Considering that, you know, I think the line of where we draw debate is when we start talking about whether or not other people should exist because what we're advocating for is peace here and creating a more tolerant society and I, I, I don't wish to ever give a platform to people that genuinely do not want other people to exist because of the color of their skin and have a genocidal mentality like that. And again, I did not know who they were at the time. But, I would say in, in these conversations, I'll take Marjorie Taylor Greene as a better example of this, it's about de-escalation. And it's something that my dad taught me, you know, because he was a, a , this isn't an actual conspiracy, he, he really was an FBI agent. But, you know, one thing that he talks about all the time is, like, de-escalation and that's what I was doing with Marjorie Taylor Greene. When she was going after us saying, you know, no you guys are crisis actors; you're paid off by, by George Soros and peddling the conspiratorial anti-Semitism and, and, and saying all these things and saying like I have a concealed, like, weapon and, like, implying that she's not afraid to use it and that she wants to shoot me and my staff. In that situation I don't, I, you know, it is not my responsibility to talk to her and have a conversation because I need to be looking out for the safety of my staff and the safety of myself, of myself in that situation. So, I was not going to give her a platform or anything because I was not going to engage. I was going to walk away and not have any form of a conversation with somebody who was attempting to do harm, basically have our, intimidate us while being armed or implying that they were. So, I, I, I love conversations, you know, as a speech and debate kid I've had to argue on both sides of this issue for several years and then now I've had to [indiscernible] the

wake of the shooting. I have conversations occasionally on Twitter with people that don't agree with me and stuff, you know, and I'm just, like, okay if you don't agree whatever but like at least get the facts straight, like. But that's what I would say is, sometimes you've got to realize you can't have these conversations because these people have genocidal beliefs that they, you know, it's not a differences of opinion if you don't think somebody should exist because of what they believe, because of the, you know what God they believe in, or what the color of their skin is. That's not a debate. We just can't have that conversation because those, we shouldn't have that level of intolerance and hatred in our society. But it's, it's a tough question that honestly I still struggle with because I want to be able to have this conversation and move us forward but I'm not going to have it with people that actively threaten to kill me or people that actively say that my friends and I are paid actors by the government and peddle conspiratorial anti-Semitism. I, I'm not going to give a platform to those people.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think – this, this week is National Free Speech Week and I'm curious as to whether, let's take Marjorie Taylor Greene again, again for example. She's verbally attacked you; other people have verbally attacked you.

DAVID HOGG: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you feel that's their first amendment right or should that kind of speech somehow be managed or, or prohibited?

DAVID HOGG: Oh no, I, I mean as much as I disagree with her I think, you know, if she's saying that in a, in a public plat, in a public space, you know, just out in the open air, you know, I, I, I don't necessarily agree with being harassed but I, I don't think that, I, I think it is fully within her, her right to say what she wants no

matter how much I disagree with it. I, I think where I would draw the line is if she's drumming up hatred online against me, for example, and, and attempting to have people send threats to me and things like that by peddling conspiracy theories about me I believe that that's an instance in which Twitter should de-platform her because it's the same case, you know, the way I see people, Donald Trump for example, being removed from Twitter is the same way I would see him as *The New York Times* refusing to publish an op-ed from him. It doesn't mean he can't go to another newspaper and it's not the government saying he can't speak. It's a, it's a private platform that gets to set the rules, right. So, I, I, I think in the case of Marjorie Taylor Green she, you know, should she have necessarily had been able to be armed and harassing a, just somebody that just barely was 18 at the time, I don't think so. But was she within her right to be able to say whatever the hell she wanted? Yeah, she was.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, but that you have expressed that you have some support for Second Amendment rights and that you don't think guns need to be taken away from anyone, these kinds of very extreme views that a lot of people placed on you. So, when you're engaging in conversations with folks like that or if you're in this kind of speech and debate situation where you're, you're, you're examining the pros and cons, what does a civilized conversation around the Second Amendment and around gun rights and gun control look like?

DAVID HOGG: I, I think there's a lot of I-statements involved because I can get deeply emotional because people care a lot, the same way that I care a lot about stopping my classmates and teachers from being shot and protecting their right to not be shot. There are many people that obviously are, who feel very strongly about,

you know, their, their right to have a, a gun in this country. So, I, I, I think if I can take the lessons that I've learned from conversations that I've had with people that don't agree with me across the country one of the main things is just meeting people, attempting to meet people where they're at. If they're willing to have that conversation and it's not literally like, as I said, like genocidal type, you know, like debating whether or not people should exist, which we should not be doing, I think what it comes down to is just seeing other people as human beings and listening to learn instead of responding and understanding that there are going to be times when I may not agree, and that's fine, so be it, because I, not, you know, honestly I don't care if they disagree with me. I'm going to keep going out and advocating for what I advocate for. But it is possible to have that conversation and I think what it looks like is saying like you know, like, okay so tell, tell me about why you feel the way that you feel and like just listen to them and don't listen to respond and interrupt them. Just listen. And then cite why you feel the way that you do and your personal reasons for feeling that way and any, any data that you have to back it up. But, again, like realizing like why it's a personal issue, in my case obviously as it is for many people, and then from there being like okay, you know? And it, it, in one instance there was somebody that was like you know so why do you want to take my guns away? And what I said to them was well, are you, you know, are you planning to kill yourself or, you know, kill other people? And they said, no, absolutely not. And I'm like, well, I'm not trying to take your guns away and if I was it would be because you had threatened, you were like, you know, threatening to shoot up my school like the shooter at my high school was and you shouldn't have an AR-15 or any gun, handgun in that way. And if you, if that did happen you have a right to due process and a right to counsel and basically every state these laws have been implemented

in to have, you know, due process and civil right, you know, protections to ensure that like people aren't just willy nilly having their guns taken away. But it really is an instance where they're a risk to themselves or somebody else. And, yeah that, that's just one instance. I could go on and on about it but, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, it, I'm curious, I do have some questions from students particularly around suggestions for engaging in activism as young people and, but, before we start that I want to talk a little bit about just was, was guns, or were guns ever an issue that you were concerned with prior to Parkland, or prior to what we know as Parkland happening?

DAVID HOGG: Yeah. I mean, I, I would say I was concerned as any pretty well-informed individual was. I mean, I, I grew up watching the news like every night with my family which I get now, now that I say that I realize is not normal. [Chuckle.] But, you know, being in like second grade and stuff and watching 60 minutes is not typical –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle].

DAVID HOGG: – like second grader things. But what I'll say is, you know, to, to give you a little context on myself, the reason why I did speech and debate is because throughout elementary and middle school I, I really struggled to learn how to read because I have dyslexia and ADD as well. And I wanted to be able to prove to my classmates and stuff that even though I, I sucked at writing and reading, like if we had to do public reading in class, you know, I, I, I kind of had a knack for, you know, getting in arguments and roasting my classmates when we would have, you know, into middle school and stuff, like, if we, if we got in our little arguments and stuff and I wanted to have the ability to basically be the best orator that I could, the

best speaker that I could so I could prove to people like just because I can't write or can't read that well, at least at the time, doesn't mean that I'm dumb, for example. And that's how I got into speech and debate, and I started learning about a lot more of these issues. When I was in my freshman year it was the year they, it was the first year that "Last Week Tonight" by John Oliver had come out. And I remember watching an episode on the NRA and that was really what like got me involved. And I was like holy crap, like, you mean like seeing shootings every day on TV is not something that other countries experience, right? Like, that there is something that can be done about this and there's lobby actively pushing to protect weapons like the AR-15 and guns like I've shot throughout my life with my father who is, you know, in law enforcement or who was in law enforcement and stuff instead of protecting people like my classmates? You know? I, I, I remember seeing Sandy Hook happen when I was in middle school and thinking about then being like how could this person ever do this? This is horrible. And, because of my involvement in speech and debate I, you know, I did care about gun violence as I think many other people do but I think the difference was I didn't feel like there was anything I could really do about it. I didn't feel like there was any organization that really reflected me as a young person and also I was just busy in high school, right? But in the wake of, unfortunately for many of these things it takes us being deeply personally affected by them to start caring. And that's what I did with my classmates in the wake of the shooting, and we started March For Our Lives and now I have all these chapters across the country and everything like that. So, no I was not really involved at all in political activism. I was, I really saw myself prior to the shooting and even a bit after the shooting as a journalist more than anything and a storyteller.



DR. HOFFMAN: Hum. Interesting. Well, and I know that you're going to meeting with, virtually, with the March For Our Lives students at UD and I'm really grateful that you're able to make that connection.

DAVID HOGG: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, what are you studying in, in college right now? What are, what, what class did I just catch you from?

DAVID HOGG: So, you just caught me from class – what was it – it's called The Democracy Project and it's a bit of a nontraditional class. In that class we're focused on writing constitutional amendments and basically our final for that class is having a, a, a constitutional convention. And then what you just caught me from was a debate that I, I had to do in section where we were debating about basically the, sorry, like, the [indiscernible], like, the, the development of the, like, the land management part of the U.S. government in the 19-, in like the early 20th century, late 19th century democratized resources and land for people. So, not, and that's what you caught me from was that.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle].

DAVID HOGG: And what I'm studying – its very niche – what, what I'm studying is history. Probably with a secondary in government. And the reason why I'm studying history is to become a better writer.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-Hum.

DAVID HOGG: That, that struggle of, of not being a great writer is something that I wanted to overcome at least but I've got to, yeah, I want to go beyond that, you know. I'm, I'm the ultimate overachiever. I, I, you know, I like going as far as I can in

these things and because of that history, studying history and everything like that I've learned to become a considerably better writer and a better storyteller. Which is one of the main reasons why I'm in that concentration is to become a good writer which is pretty much universally applicable. And understand the history of, you know, how we got here in the United States and in regard, in regards to gun violence, in regards to the immigration system, in regards to, you know, Puerto, Puerto Rico not being a state and all these like territories, for example, and the history of all of those things. So, I'm getting increasingly interested though in the history of U.S. Constitutional law and legal history around gun rights in the country especially in regards to U.S. versus Miller, the 1968 Gun Control Act and D.C. versus Heller.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you ever feel like a bit of a celebrity on campus or particularly when you're debating some of these issues? Do you ever feel that even more in the spotlight? Do you ever feel maybe you're facing more criticism than maybe the average student?

DAVID HOGG: Yeah, I mean, I think it comes with the territory. It can be difficult. I, I don't know if I would say that celebrity is the right – sorry – I don't know if I would say celebrity is the right term for it. I think, I, I, I think that I certainly do feel a bit more pressure when I'm, you know, speaking in front of my classmates or anything like that because, you know, I, I, I'm a student too. I mess up. There are things that I, you know, there are things that objectively I don't enough about to really have an opinion on. And, at, at times it can be difficult to admit that when you have that spotlight, you know, occasionally because we have this expectation on our, you know, on our leaders in society and, and any person with a platform said society to

have an opinion on everything. And I, while I understand the purpose of having that I think it's also important to give leaders the room to grow and evolve and understand that they can change their minds when confronted with new information. Not that there's anything major in everything that's happened obviously but like just generally, like, learning more about whatever historic issue there might be and learning more about like the student debt crisis, for example, even though I, that's not in my wheelhouse right? My wheelhouse is really learning and going very in-depth on gun laws and gun violence in this country. But relying on my, my fellow activists in this space is to help educate me and learn more.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, you mentioned being impacted by Sandy Hook and, and kind of growing up watching the news. Before the pandemic I would often ask my students which, what historical event do they think sort of defined their generation and overwhelmingly it was school mass shootings. And then of course the pandemic hit, and I've asked that question since then and they, you know, they're, they're very consumed by the pandemic and by how that has disrupted their lives. Do you think that you will be known as, as the mass shooting generation? Is that, is that a thing that you think defines Gen Z or is there something, something else that you would say defines Generation Z?

DAVID HOGG: That's a tough question. There's a, we, I mean we're one of the most diverse generations in American history so it's hard to define us by any one thing –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAVID HOGG: – and I, I think any attempt to do so would, would, would honestly be in some ways like disrespectful. The work that's being done in so many

different areas by my generation. I would say a general theme that defines my generation is growing up in a world of fear and what I mean by that is, you know, most, many of us were born right before and right after 9-11. You know, we grew up, our, we haven't known a, a pre-9-11 world. We haven't known a world where school shootings aren't part of the news on a weekly basis. We haven't grown up in a world where climate, you know, this idea that the reality that like if we don't do something about climate change, you know, there are going to be billions of people that are displaced and things like that. Like, we have never grown up in a world where we genuinely thought that our future was going to, you know, be necessarily better. And we, we grew up with this, this understanding that challenges the world faces. And what I'll say to that is it's, it is incredibly daunting, of course, but also if you look at the history some of the generations that have grown up during enormous challenges. You know, I'm reminded of like The Greatest Generation, you know, that grew up during the Great Depression and went on, you know, to defeat the Nazis and things like that. And not, not to compare us, obviously, but in some senses when there are these generations that grew up with these immense challenges, you know, history has a habit of movements finding their own leaders, right, like, our, from whatever generation it might be. Not that I'm the only one in any way. I'm one of thousands across the country. And I, I think that's, that fear but also combating that fear with hope and, and realizing that we don't really have a choice to do anything else is probably what I would say generally is one of the best definitions of our generation, along with being born into a world where, you know, all of these problems are created by humans for the most part. It's not, they're not just inevitabilities, they are things that we have either chosen not to address or addressed in the wrong way and as a result we come into this world.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think that's really inspiring and I think that I would agree in, in terms of some of the research I've looked and haven't read Jon's book yet but, but I have made comparisons myself before to The Greatest or The Silent Generation with, with your generation because there is a certain group-mindedness and a, a sense of community and taking care of one another and –

DAVID HOGG: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – I heard that from you earlier tonight too. So, it will be interesting to see how that, how that continues and how someone like, you know, my daughter is 11, you know, is she going to be –

DAVID HOGG: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – is, is, is it going to be, is she Gen Z? I guess she's technically Gen Z but like, you know, what kinds of things are going move her, you know, her cohort? So, let me get back to –

DAVID HOGG: Right.

DR. HOFFMAN: – youth activism. A lot of my students are curious about sort of how you do this, and Sarah tells a story: she says remember, she remembers when the shooting happened, and her high school had a silent walkout the week after. Many students held signs outside the school in protest of inaction by the government on gun violence. Many people including faculty at the high school saw the walkout as pointless and a waste of time which had a lot of the students who participated feeling very discouraged. What would you have to say to those who think young people's actions don't have an impact on these large systemic issues?

DAVID HOGG: Open a history book.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

DAVID HOGG: But, I mean, the fact of the matter is, like, you know, we didn't invent the walkouts; the walkouts were invented, if I remember correctly, by like Chicano students in Los Angeles protesting discrimination in like the '50's and '60's, right? Like, look at how things have, you know, started to change from that. Look at how, you know, kids have walked out throughout U.S. history and not to mention, like, yeah, this stuff is, it takes time, you know? It is hard to pass any gun violence prevention legislation despite most Americans supporting it because of the filibuster even when we do turn out in record numbers. But the important thing is the cultural change because at the core of political power in my view is the stories that we tell about ourselves and the stories that we tell about ourselves together that make up our, our culture. That is the fabric that is our culture, right? The inter winding of all of our stories becomes the story of our society and our history and how we got when we came here. And, although many adults may see walking out as something that's pointless I, I think there are many adults that would see something, that at the time, I mean, I don't even, I don't even need, need to say that I think this. I know this. There were many people at the time in the civil rights movement, for example, that like just thought that like older people especially that at times thought it was pointless. Not that there weren't older people in the civil rights movement, there certainly were. It was an intergenerational coalition. But there were people who thought that it was, you know, pointless to some extent or wasn't going to have an impact. Same thing with, you know, Vietnam protestors that they just wrote off as a bunch of hippies and didn't, you know, think that they could have an impact at all. And then, they lowered the voting age to 18, right, through constitutional amendments and stuff like that. So, look, yeah, this stuff is really challenging but the

reality is young people are at, like, at the core of, at the center of, you know, power and politics is culture but at the center of culture and what changes our culture us young people and in that way we actually have the most power in our society even though legally we might not have that because of, you know, us not being able to vote until we're 18. But if we define that culture and we start building power now, you know, we have the most valuable asset that anyone can have. Time. The people that started the Federalist Society, an organization that I vehemently disagree with, and I think has been really dangerous for our, for our republic, was started by a bunch of conservative law students, you know, several decades ago. And look at how basically almost everyone on the Supreme Court at this point has been endorsed by the Federalist society. Right? Even though I vehemently disagree with them on pretty much everything you cannot say that they've had an, that, that they have not had an immense impact. So, although people may have their doubts the important thing is that we keep pushing that boulder up the hill, right, and, and have a multigenerational coalition together doing that where we rely on people's mentors and for support and we can help, you know, support them with the energy that we are able to bring to the conversation too.

DR. HOFFMAN: We're, we'll go to questions in, in just a few minutes but what was your experience like writing "#NeverAgain"? Now that I, I know a little bit more about you – your writing history – that must have been difficult both as a writing challenge but also as a, as an emotional and mental challenge. So, you know, what was that like and, you know, what was it like seeing how successful it got?

DAVID HOGG: Well, I, I think one of the biggest helps is relying, as, as I said, relying on older generations in, in our, in our coalition. We have a lot of older allies

that helped us with the book, with the editing of and everything. And, because the main way that we basically worked on the writing it was I would have a bunch of like thoughts and ideas and like have a lot of conversations kind of about it, you know. And we had to assemble everything that I talked about and then I would go through it with my sister, you know, who was still like 14 at the time. And we, obviously we needed some help in that regard because, you know, I'm just not going to let a freshman and a random high school senior just write something and publish it. So, really, it, it was those editors that helped us the most in I wouldn't say formulating our ideas but formatting them in the proper manner. It, it, it was an emotional journey. It was a, it was a lot because that was basically written in the weeks after the shooting and, and right after the march basically. And, not to mention the fact that we, one thing that we don't even talk about that, in, in there is like that was published basically like four or five months before the midterms in 2018. We were, I remember talking about like going, like, talking about the book on TV, for example, and we were in the, you know, we had just, I had to take time off from the tour in order to like go and do that to help raise money for like the organization because that's a big place where a lot of money from the book went along with other charities as well. And, realizing just how much more there is to talk about in the sense that all of that has happened. So, yeah, it was a challenge but luckily because of that coalition of older people and our, our parents through helping us everything we were able to get it published. And it, it was really remarkable to see it become a New York Times best seller because I, I mean, in much of, in much of elementary school like I faced so much of a challenge learning how to read that I, I, for a long time I genuinely didn't believe I was even going to go to college because I, I felt that I didn't have teachers for much of my elementary school career and this changed because

of some of them being really incredible. I didn't really feel like I had teachers that supported me. Right? I felt that I was like a, essentially like a broken toy that was never going to be able to do anything with myself. And then if you were to tell me when I was older and, and, you know, still struggling in some remedial classes like getting through like, becoming a better reader, a better writer so on and so forth, that one day that I, you know, before I was 20 years old that I would be a New York Times best-selling author and so would my sister I, I, I don't know what I would have done. I might have slapped you across the face or something because like I –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

DAVID HOGG: – I never would have believed that, right? But I think it shows the power of persistence of course, but also support in that nobody really does this alone.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think that's an excellent point and I think as a professor of, of students obviously in, in your generation I, I see, you know, again that kind of light, that passion for whatever it is that they're, they're very passionate about whether it's about guns or something else but I also see that they often, like a lot of their questions are like well how do I even start this? How do I even do this? And I think that the idea of, of inter, intergenerational or cross-generational support is, is really crucial because older generations do have the know-how and the skills that if you are like, okay, I want to do this, you know, I think it's, it's also about having some humility too. Being like, I don't know how to do this, can you help me? I don't know how to do this. So, we've talked about precollege, what you're doing in college,. You've mentioned before that you plan to run for Congress at 25. And you're also supporting the Maxwell Frost for Congress campaign, working on that campaign. So,



why are you working on that campaign, and do you think you're still going to run for political office at some point?

DAVID HOGG: You know, honestly I don't know because I might be in law school at that point possibly. And, also, I want, I want to talk about Maxwell but one of the things that I've realized working on my first congressional campaign with Maxwell is the, how frustrating it can be at times because, you know, you get elected for two years and then it's like well you're just one of 435 people yet like there's only so much that you can do as one person in that situation. And I, I don't know, I think I, I if I can get good enough at helping elect people like Maxwell to office – and of course I'll go into it a lot more in a second – I, I would much rather have a lot of friends in Congress that are from our generation and are from March For Our Lives that are gun violence survivors of all generations that I know are just going to be morally just leaders that aren't democrats or republicans per se but first and foremost are, are morally just leaders that care about us and care about the future of our country. And work to advance, you know, work on principals and the advance those principals and not repeat the mistakes that have been made before us because the reality is our generations are going to have to work together to be the leaders that we needed but have far too few of. Because there were leaders in the past that, that did advocate for gun control. There were leaders that, you know, faced enormous challenges that advocated for different gun reforms and things like that. So, it's not like they weren't there, it's that we didn't have enough of them. I mean, and, and, and I'm not going to blame those individuals, of course, because we need their support, we need their mentorship and their guidance and luckily we do have some of that. But going into Maxwell, the, the reason why I'm working on his campaign is Maxwell was March For Our Lives' first organizing director. He is a,

like, he's got an incredible story. He was adopted and he grew up in Orlando, Florida basically his entire life. And he worked with the ACLU on the amendment for our campaign which was a voting a, a, a campaign to help restore previously convicted non-violent felons or formerly incarcerated people to restore their voting rights back. Because in Florida there are millions of people that committed, you know, made a mistake and, you know, might have been like dealing marijuana, for example; or done some offense like that that was criminalized largely based off of, disproportionately based off of race and millions of people, especially black and brown people lose, have lost their right to vote as a result of that. And Maxwell did work at the ACLU as a, as a major director on the campaign in the coalition with other organizations to help pass that amendment in Florida and he did that. And then he worked as one of the youngest people in the ACLU on their national team to press Joe Biden on the Hyde Amendment in South Carolina and got him on camera to say that he supports abolishing it. And then it turns out that the campaign said, well, he misheard the question but then he built a coalition of all of these other groups to come around and tell him and basically say to him like we need you to support abolishing this. And because of that, and because of the pressure they did on that Joe Biden changed his mind, President Biden, now changed his mind. Then as part of March For Our Lives – and I'll just go into one story that, that very succinctly talks about [indiscernible]. You know, the first thing that he did with us was I, it was the beginning of 2020 I believe and Maxwell – like January, early January – Maxwell had just been hired and he was in Orlando at Universal like Studios or whatever [indiscernible] like a half day or a day off or whatever. We had a lobbying day coming up in the Virginia state capital where we had just gotten the House, the Senate, and the, the governor essentially to be pro-gun violence

prevention for one of the first times in recent Virginia state history with this, this level of support. And, what happened is we had all these high school students that were planning to go and lobby as, as we always do at the state level when there are these legislative sessions that happen. However, there were thousands of armed protestors that threatened, that were basically saying we're all going to show up and we're all going to, like, kill you. They were sending like these death threats for our students and things like that. And basically, like threatening a lot of the groups that we were working with. Understandably a lot of the parents of these high schoolers were not comfortable with their young children or, you know, young adults going to this because they feared for their safety because many of these people not only were on to it but and this, this doesn't, I, I can't say all of them were, but many of them were white supremacists. Like many of them were actual neo-Nazis. And I called Maxwell up and told him about this and I said here's what I think we should do. We should get a bus load of, like a couple of busloads of kids like from D.C. to go to the Virginia state capital – because they're college students for the most part in D. C. – go to the Virginia state capital, spend the night on this gun violence survivor who now is a, a Virginia state House of, like House of Representatives member and sleep on the, sleep on his floor the night before, get up in the morning and go and lobby and pass those laws and get out of there before, you know, our students are in danger. That's exactly what he did. He went there, slept on the night, the, the floor the night before the, the legislative session, got up that morning super early with the rest of our team – you know, there's a photo of them, I, I don't have it with me but I would show you – of them literally sleeping in sleeping bags on this legislative, you know, office floor and getting up and passing those laws and getting out of there as a lot of these crazy like right wingers that some of whom were actual Nazis, you know,

showed up at, you know, to protest us passing these laws that simply because we want to protect our students. We want to protect everyday Virginians and Americans instead of weapons like the AR-15. And that, that's why I'm supporting Maxwell's run for Congress is because he's shown repeatedly throughout March For Our Lives that, and, and, and all these other instances that he's done this work for years. He's been part of the gun violence prevention movement since he was, since basically Sandy Hook happened, and he went to the first memorial for gun violence victims in the wake of that. And he was 15 at the time. And so, he's been doing this work for basically over a half, near a half of his life at this point. So, he's running a [indiscernible] campaign for Val Demings seat right in Orlando. And we just, even though we're not taking any corporate money we just out fundraised all of the other candidates in the race in our first quarter raising over, nearly \$170,000 from 3,000 people across the country. It shows the power of that story, right?

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAVID HOGG: And young people working together.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAVID HOGG: And older people too [indiscernible] –

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. Yeah, don't forget about us. [Chuckle]. So, I'm going to ask the audience just to start putting some questions in the, the Q and A. Let's get some questions in that queue as I wrap up my last question with David Hogg.

Here's one last question also from Margo that I thought maybe you could spend some time on. In that New York Times Magazine article, you said that you practice Metta meditation, and I don't know if that's helped you a lot. Can you explain what this is and, and any advice for students who are suffering with traumatic experiences

or who are suffering with mental ill, mental illness or anxiety or stress who, why that, that practice might help them?

DAVID HOGG: Yeah, I mean, I, obviously I can't speak to anybody else, I can only speak from my own experience. But basically like, the main type of meditation I, I really focused on the most beyond, like, even more so than Metta meditation is mindfulness basically. And, just taking five minutes a day – I don't do this religiously; like, there are months at a time where I could go without this but this is what really when I, you know, when I'm in my worst state when I'm going through a lot of like flashbacks and stuff and PTSD like and I'm not able to sleep and things like that – it's by recentering my focusing like on my breath and stuff – and I started doing this in high school to deal with anxiety actually – that it's been really helpful for me to think logically and not emotionally. Which I think especially because of social media a lot of us can struggle with where we, we just get so angry. Understand – you know, I get really pretty angry with the situation going on every day, as you can imagine. You know, seeing what happened to my community happen every day in the form of individual gun violence into a partner gun violence, everyday gun violence, gun suicides happening. You know, like, it is so overwhelming. So, what I would say [indiscernible] in that regard is like, just practice it. Just try to do it somewhat consistently. It's ironic that I say that because I do it on a need's basis, on a, like when I need to. But by doing that and just doing five minutes a day of, like, you know, mindfulness. It doesn't fix everything but it, it, it helps change your perspective to one that just makes everything a little bit better because it's one of the few things that you can control. You can't necessarily control what's happening to you, but you can control your approach to it and your, your, your view of it. So, so that's been really helpful. And one other thing that I'll plug as well – like I'm not

sponsored in anyway by this, I swear – but like the, there’s a really great podcast called The Happiness Podcast by this Yale psychologist, this professor that at a site, like focuses on psychology at Yale where she has this class – I heard all of my classmates talking about freshman year that’s on basically what is a happy life? And she turned a lot of that class into a podcast that anyone can listen to for free. So, that was really helpful for me during COVID, and it’s really helped – along with therapy – you know and hanging out with friends and implementing the lessons from that podcast and journaling and everything it’s really brought me to one of the best places mentally that I’ve been in my life. So, yeah, check, check that podcast out and yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: I’m really glad to hear that, David. All right, so, The Happiness by the way is called The Happiness Lab by –

DAVID HOGG: Yep.

DR. HOFFMAN: – Dr. Laurie Santos for those of you, those of you who want to check that out. And, and as far as mindfulness meditation and Metta or loving kindness meditation I’d recommend Jon Kabat-Zinn. Some of his audio books were, some of his work has been very useful for me too. Okay, so, we’re going to start the Q and A. I know you’ve got to run to another class in about a half hour, so I want to make sure that you get to that –

DAVID HOGG: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – on time if there’s even likes on time in Zoomland. [Chuckle].

DAVID HOGG: Yeah, well luckily it’s a, it’s a class that’s on Zoom. It’s actually a –



DR. HOFFMAN: Good.

DAVID HOGG: Yeah. It's a –

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

DAVID HOGG: So.

DR. HOFFMAN: But it's like, yeah, we don't know, like now we just have meetings back-to-back to back-to-back. Like you don't even incorporate time for [indiscernible] –

DAVID HOGG: There are no boundaries.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. But, okay, so, Ryan is one of my students. He has the first questions from our audience. So, Ryan if you want to go ahead and give us that question for David.

DAVID HOGG: [Sneezes].

RYAN: Thank you, Professor Hoffman, and thank you, David, for being so generous with your time with us tonight and having this dialogue. The first question comes from UD alumna Racheal Sulaki (sp?). She asks, that Dover High School in Delaware was placed on lockdown yesterday after a student was found in possession of a handgun. Do you think schools have a responsibility or is there a need for schools to search students or put them through metal detectors? And what problems could this create for students feeling uncomfortable at school and unable to focus on their studies?

DAVID HOGG: Well, I mean, I think that's a great question. The fact of the matter is in a lot of these instances the, the individual of course ends up walking into school with a, with a gun but they, they come from outside of school. The shooter at

my high school, you know, came from outside of, of the high school and there was no metal detector. And in the way the school was set up that never would have stopped that necessarily even with, you know, an, an armed police officer on campus. He still didn't stop it and there are few instances in U.S. history, basically none that I'm actually aware of since Columbine and possibly even before that where a police officer actually did stop a school shooting from happening in the first place. The other thing I'd point out is clearly, like, there's going to be, by increasing the security theater within our schools we're putting a bandage on for lack of a better term a bullet hole, in terms of, you know, like, we could either keep trying to address the symptoms or we can address the cause. Right? I think it would be a lot better if we didn't implement these security theater measures that we know often make students uncomfortable and we know like black and brown students specifically are discriminated against and often face brutality in the form of like obviously police brutality and other forms like that, that of course is not only distracting but can be traumatizing for the students. I think what would be best is if we work to stop these things from happening before they happen instead of trying to address them the second that they happen with a police officer with a metal detector. I think it would, that money would be much better spent paying our teachers more, it would be much better spent offering better after school programs for students, on funding school psychologists more, better counseling for students and things like that instead of pouring money into security theater that may make us feel better but doesn't actually make any of us safer and for, for many people actually doesn't make them safer and endangers them more.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Let's move on to our next audience question that will come from Kaley (sp?).



KALEY: Hi David. Thank you again for being here. I know how busy you must be with school as a student myself so, thank you again. My question is from Gina Cosenza (sp?), and she wants to know: do you believe there is such a thing as closure for those who have been through what you have, and what does the word closure mean to you?

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

DAVID HOGG: That's a really good question. I think, I, look, I'll be honest, I don't know if closure is possible. I think it's a journey that I'm still going on and I think everyone from Parkland and basically every committee in the United States because we're all impacted by gun violence in one way, or another is always going down. I, I, I think what I can answer is what the closest form of closure that I can imagine is which is a world in which our generations are, we come together and create a multigenerational coalition of people that – in a culture of mutual respect no matter our age – to work together and to make our generations the last generations in America to have to deal with this issue. Because it can be that way. There are many countries in the world that don't deal with this issue and its, you know, if guns made us safer in this instance I wouldn't be having a conversation with you in a country that has more guns than people. The fact of the matter is like as much, as much as people like to point at mental illness and other stuff like that, you know, there is mental illnesses in other countries, there's hatred in other countries, there's discrimination and other things like that. The difference here specifically in the case of like my high school is that this individual who may have had all of those things or some combination of all of those things, was able to legally obtain an AR-15 with large magazines and despite him making many threats against my school was able

to continue to have that. And, I, the point that I'm getting at is I, I think what really closure looks like to me is frankly us being able to sleep at night and knowing that we're not going to wake up the next morning to another instance of gun violence, to another school shooting, another instance of gun violence outside of the school, another instance of, you know, intimate partner violence or anything like that. It's, it is creating a country where this issue, these school shootings and acts of gun violence on a daily basis are left in our history books and not in our future headlines.

DR. HOFFMAN: Before I move on, on to our next question there was something I wanted to ask you about and give you an opportunity to talk about is we have not named this individual, the, the shooter that was, that pled guilty today. I know that that's an important thing for you about not naming these individuals. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

DAVID HOGG: Yeah. Yeah, so I think this is one place where pretty much everybody, even most of the people that disagree with me have been able to find common ground on, which is that these shooters deserve no notoriety. We know the shooter at my high school for example and many mass shooters talk about how they want to be famous from these things. They want to get in the headlines. And I, I, I can't tell you how frustrating it is. For example, the same media outlets repeatedly tout his name and, and show his face again and again and again and again while doing that in 90 percent of the time and only telling the story of the actual victims of the shooting 10 percent of the time. And, and, and the difficulty with that and frankly the, the dark reason why that happens is because it is enormously profitable to sensationalize these stories and show the, you know, the, you know, like the, the kill count, if you will, in comparison to other shootings. And almost gamify these things

in some horrific way. And we need the media to do a better job of covering these things. Many of them are starting to, to do that. I've had several interviews to date for example where they talk about how they're practicing no notoriety. They're not saying the shooter's name, they're not showing his face. And, you know, I, I think that is one, that is one place where we actually, most of us can agree on and similar to universal background checks that like we, we, we need to do something about. So, I, I think it's important to find those few places where there are common ground that we really do agree on and, and work towards that. The same thing goes for mental health specifically. Not allow it's, it's a difficult, it's more difficult in nuanced conversation that needs to be had because I'm not about to talk about just framing every white domestic terrorist as a, as a mentally ill individual when the reality is, the reason why the shooting at my high school happened is because a racist and anti-Semitic 19-year-old was able to legally obtain an AR-15. And, what I'd rather have a conversation about that is so often left out of the conversation is that two-thirds of gun deaths are suicides and there is more funding around mental health in our schools and communities that needs to go into that. So, those stories are really not being told on the news like basically at all. And we really need to realize that those deaths are preventable. We know that I, I think if I remember this, the stat correctly, about 90 percent of people who attempt suicide and survive do not reattempt. You don't get that chance with a gun. It is one of the most lethal methods of suicide out there. And, in the countries that have changed, you know, whatever the most common form of suicide was that was the most lethal they actually see reduction in suicides because people end up surviving more. So, we need to have that conversation and we need to be working together on this. If you believe that genuinely all we need to do is focus on combating hatred and combating, you know,

and combating mental, mental illness in the form of like increasing funding for therapists whatever it might be, I'm all for that. We're trying to do that too. Join us in that. But let's not stigmatize mental health by framing anyone that has depression or PTSD like myself, as somebody that's going to be immediately violent and a threat to society when that is just not the case. In fact, many of, many people that are mentally ill are more likely to have violence inflicted upon them by the state or different people than they are to actually be violent themselves.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Great. I want to remind the students that are in Mitchell Hall that if you'd like to raise your hand one of our producers will come over and get your question to submit to us online. But I think we have another question from the online audience and Tre (sp?) is up next to ask this question.

TRE: Thanks, Dr. Hoffman. And thanks David for coming. UD student Giovanni Lopez (sp?) asks: how do you feel about those people that are in government that have that way of thinking and still have their office? I think specifically of your run-ins with government officials that claim you lie or verbally attacked you.

DAVID HOGG: Yeah. It, it's a good question. Obviously I'm [chuckle] not a fan of those people. But look, I, I, I often reflect on some, some of the stuff that Dr. King talks about or, or talked about which is attacking the sources of evil rather than the perpetrators. And what I, what I mean by that is I don't want more concern with the, the anti-Semitism expressed by attacking, you know, wealthy individuals that have, you know, like, that consistently again, and again like prove like to be, like, even though they say they're not anti-Semitic every one of the people that they're pointing out is, you know, a, a Jewish billionaire. I'm a lot more concerned with combatting

that hatred and different forms of intolerance. You know? Even if they don't necessarily impact me, you know, like racism for example or anti-Semitism because ultimately we're all impacted by these things in one way or another. And but that's what I'm focused on, you know? As much as a, a problem that Marjorie Taylor Greene or Donald Trump is in my opinion, they're symptoms of a system that was, that is producing them, right? A system of hatred, a system of the commodification of hatred on social media where it has become and enormously profitable for social media companies that give platforms to such hateful individuals that describe, you know, human beings in terrible ways and dehumanizing ways. And I, yeah, I feel horrible that those people are in office but ultimately they're, they're a symptom of the problem and what I want to actually focus on is the system that is creating that symptom in the first place.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Let's see, I don't, I haven't gotten any questions yes, yet from our in-person audience but I think we have, we might have another question from our online audience. Ryan, are you ready?

RYAN: Yes. This question comes from Susan from Greenville, Delaware. She says she saw and admired how you've turned a traumatic event into activism. You were making a difference, but do you get any support from other folks who have experience similar tragedies and turned to activism? I'd like to think that people like John Walsh and others are all part of supporting one another and your classmates as you turned to activism.

DAVID HOGG: Yeah, I, I'll say many young people in March For Our Lives are gun violence survivors themselves that have done this work. So, it, it really is a support network. I would say it is difficult to say the least. There is, trauma is a very,

very nasty and horrific thing in the way that it divides people, in the way that it divides communities and leaves a permanent scar on, on many of them. I think the important thing that I – one thing that I've seen happen a lot in conversations in activism and organizing and just circle the people who have been impacted by gun violence is because we have all been harmed in one way or another of course, people start sharing their traumas. Deeply, deeply personal things. You know, people often talking about quite literally the worst day of their lives. And there's a tendency of those conversations to start to devolve at times into a comparison of traumas to say that X person's experienced more than Y person and somehow is more valid in [indiscernible] and things like that. When in reality we all need to realize that no matter what we've experienced we are all different people and we have different biochemistry obviously and on top of that none of us should have gone through this in the first place, right? No matter how many, you know, number of people that allow to die from gun violence no matter what our experience has been. All of us are here because we don't want this to continue. So, yes, I, I work with a lot of other survivors as well across the country and it's difficult because there's a lot of survivors' guilt as you can imagine. It's difficult for people to take care of themselves when our elected officials aren't doing their job and every single day we see what happened on the worst day of our lives happening again, and again, and again for thousands of other people every year.

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you for that. Let's see. Let's jump to another question from Kaley from the audience.

KALEY: So, Susan Luci (sp?) asks, she says there's a connection between activism and courage and she wants to know how might you encourage people your age to find courage to step up and be actively involved in change?

DAVID HOGG: Um-hum. Yeah, that is a really good point. I, I think the first thing that I would say that has enabled me to have any amount of courage is community. You know, I, I think a lot about how you need a community of people around you that are supporting you. I think that anybody that says that they don't care what anybody else says for the most part, not, not always but a lot of the times lying because I think everybody has to have a team of people that are able to call them in because, you know, you can't do anything necessarily by yourself. You need to know, you know like, hey, if you mess up like people can call you and that you trust and, you know, that you, that you trust and will tell you that you messed up or whatever it might be. So, I, I think that's one of the things is developing a community of friends and taking time for yourself to do the things that you love because in activism and in organizing it can and it will kill the things that you love. I've seen that happen with me in the past and it took me a long time to, to get back in touch frankly with my emotions because of how desensitized I, I became from hearing people talk every single day about the worst day of their lives, you know, throughout my gap year, throughout our, our tour, throughout the election and things like that. And you have to really take care of yourself in order to do this work because in the immediate after, you know, in a couple, a couple of days after the shooting our team, I wasn't there but our team met with John Lewis and one thing that John Lewis said was that this is a marathon not a sprint. And I, I don't think I've ever heard a piece of – I, I understood what that meant but I didn't understand how to practice that in reality in 2018 and 2019. And I've realized now what it means is

activism is a, you know, organizing social movements are collective actions of groups of individuals that work together for, for some common goal. As a result, movements are nothing more than people. If those individuals that are those people are not taking care of themselves the movement is not taking care of itself. And those people have to realize it is essential that you are able to delegate so that you can take a break because this is not a campaign, this isn't even a marathon. This is an ultra-marathon where we know, you know, it's like, it's like being told to go from Boston, where I am right now, to Delaware but I don't have a map of Delaware. I know what Delaware looks like, right? Like, I know what Rehoboth Beach looks like, but I don't know how to get there, right? So, what we have to do is we have to pace ourselves on the journey of how to get there in the first place. And understand that there's a possibility that we might need to pass, you know, get as far as we can but pass the baton onto the next generation which is the absolute worse-case scenario, but we have to do this for as long as we have to. And the reality is there is no election day to end gun violence unfortunately. It is going to take years to do that although I hope it doesn't.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I missed some of that question because I, I, I blanked out for a minute but I'm back. I think we have time for one more question before I draw things to a close. So, Tre, do you have a question from, from the audience for us?

TRE: Yes, we have one from the watch party.

DR. HOFFMAN: Oh, great. [Chuckle].

TRE: Yeah. So, this is from Nia Coleman (sp?) and she says –

DR. HOFFMAN: Hi, Nia.

TRE – [indiscernible] –

DR. HOFFMAN: Wave at Nia, David. [Chuckle].

DAVID HOGG: Hello.

TRE: And the question is, David: if you've had time to read the apology from the shooter has it healed even partially any hurt for you and do you think that forgiveness is something you will reach personally?

DAVID HOGG: You know, it, it's something very sensitive that I, I'm still processing right now. And, and I'm sorry that I don't have a more direct answer but that's, that's the reality. I don't know how I feel about it. I, I mean, obviously, like I, my first, like, its, I feel very conflict, complicated about it because the reality is there's nothing that is ever going to bring my classmates back. And I, I certainly cannot speak for any individual family or anything like that that has been impacted. Not that I necessarily want to give this person forgiveness in any way, shape or form. It's that I just, I genuinely don't even know how to feel considering every, all, everything that has happened in, in the past week in regards (sic) to the court case and everything. I think again it comes back to that question of closure and, and what, what the closest thing looks, like, for that. And, and I think for almost all of us, even if we had disagreements on how to get there, is creating a world where school shootings are a thing of the past and are no longer a daily reality. Because that, it, that can be the world that we live in. It, it is a choice that we make because there is, there are many other countries that do not deal with this. Even countries that have very high levels of gun ownership and do not have school shootings on a daily basis but have the proper regulations in order to prevent them from happening. And, to answer your

question more specifically, yes, I've heard the apology. I, it, it's hard for me to feel any sympathy at all.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's understandable. Well, before I, I close up, is there anything you want to say to the UD students who are part of our chapter of March For Our Lives?

DAVID HOGG: Yeah. Just first of all, thank you all for being incredible people and, and being part of this fight. The only reason why I, I have any, any impact, the only reason why any of my classmates and I have had any impact and the movement has had any impact is because of people, like, you all that are part of our chapters that are part of the movement in general that are, you know, even people that are part of other organizations and stuff because we're working together. We're showing a legitimate front of this fight to end gun violence and create peace in this country one where we are advocating for our right not to be shot. And the only reason that's possible is because of young people like you all standing up, you know, young, just like the young people that walked out of, you know, millions of young people that walked out of their high schools. That's why these things are happening, and things have changed. Granted they have not changed nearly as fast as I wish they would but we, it's important to reflect on how much we've done in the past three years, you know? I, I think it could be argued that more has happened in the past three years than has happened in the past 50 even in regards to changes in gun violence and things like that and [indiscernible] state gun laws, we have gotten CDC funding for the, CDC funding and NIH funding for gun violence research and the effectiveness of gun laws, we repealed the Dickey Amendment, and we took out more NRA backed politicians than ever before in U.S. history in Congress in 2018



and continued that legacy again in 2020. So, it's a constant fight and I, I'm so appreciative of you all and I know we'll be meeting at a later date, and I've reached out to you all and have heard back and won't – I still have yet to get back to you to our latest email because I'm in the middle of midterms but I promise you I will get back to you tomorrow.

DR. HOFFMAN: It's been a busy day.

DAVID HOGG: Yeah. But yeah, that, that's the message I had is just honest to God, thank you.

DR. HOFFMAN: Great. Well, thank you David. I want to just say how appreciative we are that you could make the time to come in between your classes. What class are you going to next?

DAVID HOGG: So, I'm, I'm, there's a, there's this system that we have to have if we're, I'm part of the, this group on campus that focuses on small claims law, and we have to go to basically three trainings a week that are, like, pretty much mandatory in order to be able to [indiscernible] this. So that's, that's the next thing that I have to go and work on is that working group to discuss Massachusetts small claims law and just a way of getting me more, it's one of the main pre-law programs that we have here. It's like, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, good luck and I'm going to go ahead and let you go because I know you can, you need to prep for class. I have a couple of –

DAVID HOGG: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – last announcements but thank you so much, David.



DAVID HOGG: Yes. And, and the last thing that I'll say is, please, if you're interested you can go to [MarchForOurLives.com](https://marchforourlives.com) to donate. If you're interested in Maxwell Alejandro Frost campaign it's just like Maxwell Alejandro Frost you can go to [Frostforcongress.com](https://frostforcongress.com) for that. And, if you're a student on campus, first of all thank you for watching this, but also please join the chapter and I'm sure there will be resources [indiscernible] you guys all about that. So, thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you so much, David.

DAVID HOGG: Yeah.

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ⁱ David Hogg’s activism has taken him around the country, meeting with impacted families and diverse communities to deepen his knowledge of gun safety and the politics of ending gun violence. With his younger sister, Lauren, also a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, he co-wrote [#NeverAgain](#), a *New York Times* best-seller. David and Lauren also contributed to the best-selling book, [Glimmer of Hope: How Tragedy Sparked a Movement](#), a compilation of writing from the founders of March For Our Lives.