

Guns are responsible for the deaths of nearly 30,000 Americans each year – the equivalent of an entire New York City marathon.

On an average day, eight young people are killed by gun violence in the United States. That's 2,920 each year.

 = 1000 Americans  = young people

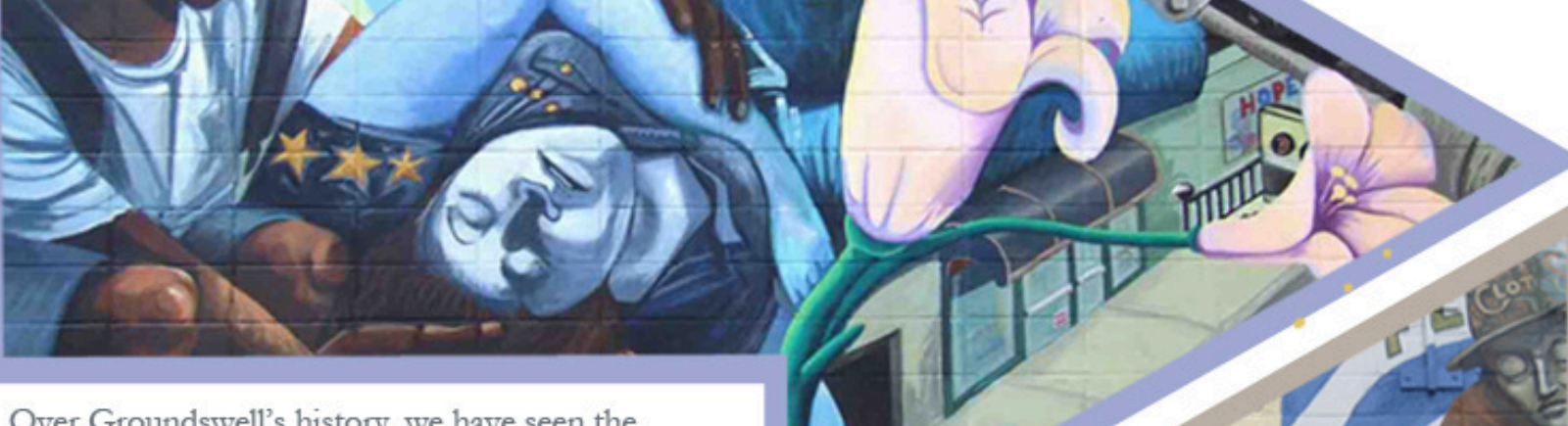


Each year in New York City, there are approximately 1,500 shootings.

Although New York is a national leader in sensible anti-gun legislation, the state is impacted by the weak gun laws of other states and non-existent and lax enforcement of laws at the federal level.

Groundswell builds awareness by training a future generation of civic-minded young people to become advocates against gun violence and other important issues.

In New York City, 85% of crime guns and approximately 40% of crime guns in upstate New York come from states with weak gun laws.



Over Groundswell's history, we have seen the lives of many of our youth participants impacted by gun violence. Groundswell is committed to empowering New York City teens to add their voices and perspectives to the public discourse surrounding this critical issue, to ensure the safety of themselves, their families, and the communities in which they live.

In 2009, 13 young people, together with artists Joe Matunis and Crystal Clarity, created Groundswell's first monumental mural examining the causes, consequences of, and alternatives to gun violence in New York City.

"Piece Out, Peace In" is a collaborative gun violence prevention mural created in Crown Heights by Groundswell youth together with American Friends Service Committee and the Office of New York State Assemblymember Karim Camara.

The first section of the mural, which unfolds in a narrative from left to right, addresses the history of guns in the United States. The design flows into imagery showing how the current laws and regulations lead to death by guns in urban communities. The final section of the mural illustrates the power of communities and youth to stand together to end gun violence.

Following the success of this collaboration, which extended to community-based organizations, gun violence prevention activists, clergy, police officers, and community members, Groundswell continued to engage young people in anti-violence organizing.

In 2010, Groundswell was invited to create a series of anti-gun murals at Aspirations Diploma Plus High School in Brooklyn. This last chance high school straddles the border between Brownsville and East New York, two neighborhoods which account for upwards of half of all crimes in north Brooklyn's ten precincts.

In 2011, Groundswell again partnered with American Friends Committee to create an anti-violence mural on the side of a community center in Crown Heights, the site of the fatal shooting of a teenager by police in 1997.

Groundswell works with at-risk youth in their schools and in their communities to hit the problem at its source.



IMPACT CASE STUDY
In 2011, 15 young people created a monumental public mural in Washington Heights that addresses the devastating impact of gun use in New York City and showcases alternatives to violence for youth in their community.

In "Weaving Change Beyond the Shadows," a series of diverse figures representing individuals from the local Washington Heights community are connected by a long, beautiful cloth. The cloth is whole in some places, torn in others. By standing together, the figures take responsibility to mend the fabric and restore peace to their community.

The work of these teens was particularly meaningful in summer 2011, as Congress once again considered the issue of Concealed Carry Reciprocity through the Stearns legislation H.R. 822, a dangerous new bill that would put thousands more concealed guns into the streets of New York City.

H.R. 822 sought to overturn New York's concealed carry laws by allowing concealed carrying by people who cannot meet New York State's standards.

Groundswell youth, together with our partners New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, American Friends Service Committee, and Community League of the Heights (CLOTH), hosted a press conference to call for sensible steps to reduce gun violence. The backdrop of the event was the public unveiling of the young people's anti-gun violence mural.

At this press conference, public officials including New York State Senator Adriano Espaillat, New York City Councilman Ydani Rodríguez, and New York City Community Affairs Commissioner Nazli Parvizi spoke to Washington Heights youth, their families, and local community members about the potential impact of H.R. 822 on New York.

The press conference and the mural unveiling received significant local and city-wide press coverage, including The Manhattan Times, DNAinfo, and WBAI, further amplifying our young people's voices to reduce youth violence in all forms. This event was also an opportunity to celebrate the hard work and achievement of Groundswell's extraordinary young people.

Groundswell develops community support to speak out against gun-violence



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As New York City continues to develop innovative anti-violence efforts, through such initiatives as the New York City Task Force to Combat Gun Violence and Youth SHIELD, Groundswell is at the forefront of envisioning how public art can be used as a tool to in the fight against guns.

Groundswell is currently organizing efforts to launch a youth-driven anti-gun public art campaign throughout New York City. This campaign will use a series of community mural-making projects to engage young people in target neighborhoods with more than twice the citywide average of gun violence. It will bring these teens together with community members, government officials, and leading community organizations to put a stop to gun violence in all forms.

This campaign is based on best practices outlined in the CeaseFire approach to public safety and can serve as a national model replicable in communities across the United States. Ultimately, Groundswell seeks to empower ongoing activism among artists, youth, and community leaders to stand up for safe neighborhoods for all New Yorkers.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence
www.nyagv.org

Mayors Against Illegal Guns
www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org

CeaseFire
www.ceasefirechicago.org

