

21 Students Bring Weapons to School to Protect Themselves From Danger Outside School That City Fails to Address

There, New York Post, we fixed the title for you.

The “gun bust” that transpired on Wednesday in our school community is being generalized and stereotyped to mischaracterize the entire student body. And it’s misleading. It was actually a wrong choice made by one student, not our entire student body, who New York Post journalist Selim Algar generalized as criminals, who attend what he called the “school of glock.”

The school safety officers and administrators in our building did their job, spotting the gun immediately and having that student removed. Although we were unsettled, obviously, by the situation, none of us actually felt unsafe in the moment. We know our school security agents well. We trust them. We trust our schools’ administration. We have never felt unsafe at school, but we have certainly felt we needed self protection outside of school, as many of us have hour-long commutes following the school day.

Interestingly, we could not find a lot of information online about the student himself who brought the gun. Instead of focusing on him and the actual incident, Algar’s article depicts us and our fellow peers as “criminals,” as if our community is full of gangbangers with bad intentions trying to bring violence into our school. On Tuesday, when a young white boy in Michigan murdered four students and a teacher, the articles in the New York Post focused primarily on that individual student. They even used a picture of him from elementary school instead of a mug shot. Rather than actually investigating the incident at our school, Algar chose to generalize all of us as criminals and say that our safety system is to blame for an incident that did not end in actual violence--when in fact, our safety system worked. He was apprehended immediately. The gun was never pulled out. No one was injured or hurt, The situation was completely diffused in 20 minutes. The student never even entered a classroom.

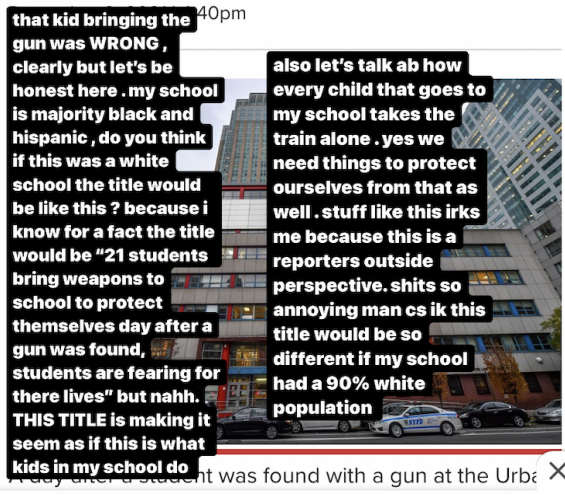
Because of this misleading article, students now feel targeted, criminalized, harassed, embarrassed and angered by a headline that makes our school communities seem dangerous and creates a stigma around all of us. “Students, families, and educators aren’t going to want to come here, and it’s a good school,” one student said. Moreover, Algar states in his article, “There are a total of 1,000 kids in the Adams Street building, according to the DOE.” This implies that we have a fairly large school instead of the reality that we have three distinct, tight-knit, small school communities, where we feel safe and seen. In addition, though he lists knives and stun guns among the “weapons” found, he does not include confiscated items take from students such as: a plastic edge brush, a wrench brought by a student who wanted to fix his bike, an Afro pick, and scissors that have been on our school supply list since kindergarten.

Samara, a student from Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice (SLJ), describes her experience seeing the headline below. “Last night, scrolling through Snapchat, I saw a photo of a gun and cash posted alongside a picture of my school. I was filled with rage because I realized immediately that because of one student’s choices, we were now all being seen as criminals. The focus on 21 weapons found through scanning the next day ignored the fact that many of us feel like we need to be able to defend ourselves, not in school, but outside of school. Some of the weapons, especially found on young women, were pepper spray and stun guns that are commonly used even by adults for protection. The narrative about our school is that we are violent kids that bring guns to school and bring weapons, and the only way to be ‘civilized’ is to have metal detectors. This simply doesn’t happen at majority white schools.” She wrote the following instagram story in response:

**METRO**

Impromptu metal detector finds kids with 21 weapons at Brooklyn school day after student gun bust

By Selim Algar



Daysha, another student from SLJ, saw the headline, and because her English teachers taught her how to investigate sources, she looked up the journalist, seeing Selim Algar’s photo and other articles he had written. The next morning, as she walked into school, she allegedly saw Algar standing outside the building and hassling students for comments on our way into school. “When I saw him, knowing what he wrote, I started feeling short of breath and had a panic attack,” she said. After her panic attack, she had to go through security and have someone search through her entire bag, causing even more anxiety before entering school. She wishes she could have confronted Algar to share her feelings and perspective, but she was afraid of being wrongfully portrayed as a stereotypical angry Black woman.

Algar, the author of the article, also quotes Greg Floyd, the president of the school safety agents union, as being in support of more school safety agents and more scanning with metal detectors. What he fails to report on is how scanning impacts students trying to enter the building. “My first thought going into school is whether or not I will make it on time for morning check-in or if I have completed all my assignments to the best of my ability, not what is in my bag that might set off a metal detector. It feels like I’m going through TSA to go on an international flight, not like I’m about to walk into my classes,” Samara remarked.

First of all, the scanning is not consistent. Emily, a student at Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women (UAI), described her experience having her bag checked this morning. “They asked me if I had a vape in my bag. I said no, and they said, ‘I believe you,’” letting me go right through. The next person behind me was asked if she had a lighter, and when she said no, the same agent said, “I don’t believe you. Show me your bag.” If we are going to scan bags, they should all be scanned, teachers included. The lack of consistency creates biases and frustration among students who feel targeted or bullied.

For instance, one student forgot to take her phone out of her pocket before her second day of scanning, and when she pulled it out the school safety officer, snatched it from her hand and gave it to another officer who said, “Just leave it here. She did this already. She should know better.” She had only had scanning one time before and this mistake made her late for school as well as embarrassed, having her entire bag looked through by a stranger, a bag she was

taking to stay the night at her aunt's house. When the student expressed exasperation and frustration, the safety officer responded, "I don't like your attitude. I'm gonna move slower now." They made her subject to random scanning and physically grabbed her body to move her out of line. The student was crying and visibly rattled after this experience and said, "I feel far less safe around that security officer than I've ever felt at school. It's uncomfortable. It's embarrassing. People are watching. I'm visiting my aunt's house and I have random strangers rummaging through my underwear and bras."

Selim Algar and Greg Floyd, along with many city politicians and officials, talk a lot about "school safety." They don't, however, talk about what makes students feel safe. "I live in the projects by Coney Island. If you're not going to personally take me home and make sure I'm safe, then don't take my pepper spray," one student said.

Another remarks, "Most of us have to leave our neighborhoods to get a good education. Now, the schools that we love are experiencing a single story in the media, and it's not a good one. We don't have the luxury of living in Manhattan where things are peaches and cream. Many of us live in communities with higher crime rates, houselessness, rape, and drug addiction--all of which are not getting attention in the media."

Ultimately, we worry that our school will be forced to scan students every day instead of the city actually solving the problems that make us as students feel unsafe. We know that "research also shows that schools with 50% or more students of color were more than 18 times more likely to use a combination of metal detectors, school police, locked gates, and sweeps than schools with less than 20% students of color" ([EdTrust](#)) We don't want metal detectors. We don't want more police officers in our school. We want our neighborhoods to be safe. We want people to be housed, and to get help with mental health issues.

We know what the student who brought the gun to school did was wrong. It was careless and stupid, and he is already being punished for it. We don't want to be punished for his actions, as well. We want freedom and trust in our school communities, and we want the narrative to shift. So, Selim Algar, if you want to know what a day in our school is like, come find out. Come see how we interact. Look at how we can exist without being further policed. Perhaps, you can write a more researched article. We are applying to colleges. We are learning in our classes. We are healing our communities.

Names:

Afsana Islam

Ineiry Pena

Aliyah Nesbitt

Samara Cotto

Meagan Zullo

Daysha Williams

Blessing Ojo

Emily Payamps



SCHOOL OF GLOCK

One day with metal detector, and Brooklyn HS campus seizes 21 weapons

FULL STORY PAGE 7

A day after a student was discovered carrying this gun (above) into the Urban Assembly School for Law and Justice, officials installed a metal detector — and found students with an array of knives and brass knuckles like these (right).