

Unwritten

two days in May / the American Guns Play

A short Peoplehood REAL TIME spoken word poem play
written by Jaisey Bates in 2022 on the last day of May as part of
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER's *Ripped: The Living Newspaper Project*

Author's Note:

This writer grieves these stories.

This writer grieves that this nation continues to write these stories.

Continues to unwrite so many stories.

This writer grieves the loss of the Unwritten.

Holds space for their families and communities.

Writes words:

June 2016 Pulse / Orlando – Oct 2017 Harvest Music Festival / Las Vegas –

Feb 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS / Parkland – Nov 2018 The Borderline / Thousand Oaks
– school shootings – police shootings – American gun violence historical / contemporary – etc.

If there is interest in reading any of these in consideration for school or nonprofit projects seeking to inspire positive actions and change, please write to the writer via their [website](#) or NPX [page](#).

Renderings:

On text with no additions or changes please.

Can be solo read or voiced by an ensemble.

Tandem words echoes riffs select sung text are encouraged IRL as Zoom doesn't do unison.

Zoom also doesn't do short phrased rapid paced shared text so feel free to combo lines.

Optional: Parentheticals.

Optional: The colors Red White Blue can be expressed separately or in combination whenever / wherever / however wished. If colors are expressed exploration of renderings is encouraged: voiced/unvoiced, varied meanings/readings including homonyms (*i.e.* read / *why...*'t / blew).

If anyone needs time, others are free to carry their lines or at any point anyone can say:

We hold this space and everyone welcomes a chance to take time and hold space for each other.

Land Acknowledgment:

The writer wishes to acknowledge the Indigenous original stewards and caretakers of this land and their relations and generations past, present and future. These words have been written within the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of Indigenous peoples including the Tongva, Gabelino, Chumash and Tataviam (Los Angeles basin area).

(red
White
blue)

Two thousand
twenty two –
two days in May

MAYDAY
MAYDAY
MAYDAY

IT'S
THE AMERICAN GUNS
PLAY

Two more
shattered communities –
Two more cities in the USA

Two more
settings for The Play's international records breaking
interminable national terminations tour

More guns than people
Only nation with more guns than people
More mass shootings than days

Two more
terror-filled blood-written
ending scenes

Too many more
unwritten innocents
days lives stories dreams

Be forewarned
Be aware
Be advised:

This American
Guns Play
IS

It's alive
A sentient entity

It breathes – It has rights

Founding Fathers fathered
Constitutionally committed
Second Amendment inscribed

(red
White
blue)

Cue the need for another education
How to Avoid Annihilation
we teach our children – train ourselves:

RUN
HIDE
FIGHT

So many Americans so fiercely protect
their American right to buy guns – bear arms
once one's 18 there's no need to wait

(But who
can bear
the weight

this right
that un
writes

these stories
these stories
these stories

arms outreaching
words and breath
unwinding into air

Who can bear the weight
this grief-etched raised-relief map
these ever expanding loss cartographies

beyond this line there be ...
beyond this line ...
this line ...)

So two young men
too young to buy alcohol
buy assault weapons

It's legal
they are free to do so
they freely do so

Two days in May
Two cities in the USA
Thirty-one die

No chance to Run
Hide
Fight

No chance to say
good
bye

THE
AMERICAN GUNS
PLAY

Setting:

A store – a predominately Black (redlined food desert) community's only grocery
A school – a predominately Latine community's second through fourth grade elementary

Time:

Two days
in May

(yesterday
tomorrow
today)

At Rise:

The Play opens
Its eyes:

The Tops Friendly Market
the only market for miles
Buffalo, New York:

A church deacon stops by to offer rides
A shopper picks up a child's birthday cake
They and eight others will not survive

Robb Elementary School ten days later
two connected classrooms
Uvalde, Texas:

Fourth grade students watch *Lilo and Stitch* – learn the word 'ohana –
summer vacation's just two days away but for 19 students – for two teachers –
these are the final moments of their final day

At Rise:
The Play opens
Its mouth:

(sharp
White
teeth)

two angry young men
two teens war weapon'd
two days in May – two cities in the USA

The Play wants
needs (insatiable)
feeds (ravenous)

Time suspends
bends – ends
Enter, Oblivion

(all the unprotected ways –
all the legally protected American ways
Oblivion entered)

Oblivion One social media self-promotes
he livestreams – he's real time audience'd
replacement theory manifesto'd

body armor protected he's unaffected
by the security guard's shot
he kills the guard

Oblivion Two shoots
his grandmother
crashes her car

makes his way unobstructed
unrestrained
enters – plays sad music

says *Goodbye* to the teacher
trying to lock the door
starts to shoot

Parents surge toward the school – scream
they are obstructed – restrained
a mother is handcuffed

Police call for reinforcements – stay in the hall
while children and teachers die
on the other side of the wall

The Play feeds
It feeds
It feeds

Time suspends bends ends – ending stories unfold – unwind –
bodies lives families communities safe havens savaged ravaged shattered
innocents unsaved The End THE END *THE END* and did you know

there are federal funds for schools where mass shootings occur
the government pays so they can raze the buildings – build again –
raise shiny new classrooms over the ghosts of

classmates
teachers
friends

(this is an American story
this is America's story too
a shiny new nation and narrative

raised over ghosts
written in blood
built over bones

stolen lands
razed nations

mass graves

red
White
blue)

The Play feeds
It feeds
It feeds

Two more
new scenes
blood-written

Too many more
innocents' stories
violently unwritten

yesterday
tomorrow
today

again
and again
and again

THE END
THE END
THE END

says The
American
Guns Play

We say their names
We hold their names to the sky
We hold this space

Buffalo, New York
The 14th of May 2022
THE UNWRITTEN:

Roberta Drury, 32
Margus Morrison, 52
Andre Mackneil, 53

Aaron Salter, 55
Geraldine Talley, 62
Celestine Chaney, 65

Heyward Patterson, 67
Katherine Massey, 72
Pearl Young, 77
Ruth Whitfield, 86

We say their names
We hold their names to the sky
We hold this space

Uvalde, Texas
The 24th of May 2022
THE UNWRITTEN:

Eliana Garcia, 9
Jacklyn Jaylen Cazares, 9
Uziah Garcia, 9

Alexandria Aniyah Rubio, 10
Alithia Ramirez, 10
Amerie Jo Garza, 10

Annabell Guadalupe Rodriguez, 10
Eliahana Cruz Torres, 10
Jayce Carmelo Luevanos, 10

Jose Flores, 10
Maite Yuleana Rodriguez, 10
Makenna Lee Elrod, 10

Nevaeh Bravo, 10
Rogelio Torres, 10
Tess Marie Mata, 10

Xavier Javier Lopez, 10
Jailah Nicole Silguero, 11
Layla Salazar, 11
Maranda Mathis, 11

Irma Garcia, 48
Eva Mireles, 44

We hold this space

We hold this space

WE HOLD
THIS SPACE