

VIEWPOINTS

# A YOUTHFUL PERSPECTIVE

By **Dylan Scott**, *Las Vegas Sun*

It's been a month since the horrific shooting in Tucson that left six people dead and 13 wounded. Among the injured was Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head but is recovering.

The shooting's youngest victim was

9-year-old Christina Taylor Green. In a speech, President Barack Obama called for national harmony and eulogized Christina along with the other shooting victims.

Christina "showed an appreciation for

life uncommon for a girl her age," Obama said. "I want to live up to her expectations, I want our democracy to be as good as Christina imagined it, I want America to be as good as Christina imagined it."

As the nation continues to reflect

on what happened, the Sun wanted to know what young people in our community are thinking about the future of America.

Their responses to the Sun's questions are condensed and edited for clarity.



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## Daniel Pereira

*fifth-grader at the Meadows School in Las Vegas*

**An important topic of conversation since Tucson is how politically divided our country has become. How can we start to bridge that gap?**

What's happening is the Republicans and Democrats can never agree, which leads to more and more conflict. They never come together to try to settle their debates.

I understand that's a hard thing to do, but instead of just blaming each other in political ads and the press — I think that's just wrong, it's not a civil way to make your point — they could handle their disputes in a more peaceful way by having honest conversations.



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## Nicole Santoro

*senior and member of "We the People," a congressional-style competitive debate team, at Bishop Gorman High School in the southwest valley*

**How did you react when you first heard about Tucson? How do you feel now?**

I felt like that's the type of thing that would happen in a different country, not ours, where different ideas are so welcome. It really upset me, and I'm still really upset, but we just can't let it get to us. We can't let this one deranged man affect how unique our country is and our debate. I think instead of focusing on how different the two sides are, we should be more focused on the common ground in between because at the end of the day, both Democrats and Republicans really do want to help. I think we need to keep in mind that everyone wants what's good for our country.



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## T.J. Weiten

*senior enrolled in advanced placement government at Faith Lutheran Junior-Senior High School in Summerlin*

**How do you feel about a political process that is largely defined by its negativity?**

I definitely don't like that we've gone in a direction with our discourse that feels so negative, but at the same time, I realize that negativity works. They don't run attack ads just because they want to be vicious; they do it because if they run them, it's going to really catch the attention of the people listening or watching.

There's always going to be someone who disagrees with your opinion, and then you'll always find someone who really disagrees with your opinion and will be willing to fight and name-call. It's important to be informed on the issues so you can make your own decisions and ignore the background noise.



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## Adam Wozniak

*fifth-grader and member of Cobras Making a Difference and student council at Martha P. King Elementary School in Boulder City*

**Why should people care about getting involved in their community or taking an interest in politics?**

You want to make a difference because if you want to have a good life — and you want your children to have a good life — then you need to be ready for whatever there is in store for you. Make the best of what God gives you.

When I get a job, I'll plan to donate the money to the homeless or to another worthwhile cause.

## Aubrey Stubbs

*fifth-grader and member of Cobras Making a Difference and student council at Martha P. King Elementary School in Boulder City*

**Why is it important for young people to be active in the community?**

We do a different projects every month with Cobras Making a Difference. One might be going around the community and picking up trash or writing letters to residents at The Homestead, a local

senior center, because they get kind of lonely there. Participating allows me to reach my goal of helping others and making the difference that I want to make.



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## Joe Rajchel

*senior and editor-in-chief of The Investigator at Green Valley High School in Henderson*

**In what ways have you tried to take an active role in the community? What about the future?**

In 2008, I canvassed for the Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama campaigns. Last year, I was involved with the Rory Reid and Harry Reid campaigns — just going door-to-door, making phone calls to make sure people voted and understood the importance of their vote.

What I want to do when I get out of college is be a campaign manager. For that, I'll have to start at the local level to move my way up, but I feel like at the local level, I'll get to know what people's issues are and I get to be really involved with people and find out what's important to them. If my candidate wins, then we have to go in and make sure people's needs are being met.



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## Hunter Goeken

*sixth-grader at Henderson International School*

**At your age, how do you learn about important issues and stay updated on politics?**

I learn a lot just talking with my friends and my classmates and teachers. One person who got me interested was my grandpa because he always talks about politics and the latest news. My parents and I discuss these things a lot, and I try to watch the news. If you start at a young age, learning about it and getting involved with it, it can help you build a smarter community.



CHRIS DeVARGAS / LAS VEGAS SUN

## MaShayla Ennis

*senior and student body president at Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy in Las Vegas*

**Why do you think it's important for people your age to be engaged with government?**

What the government can teach us is that history tends to repeat itself and, although we're not old enough to vote, we can learn from the mistakes of our parents and those who are older than us. That way, we can reshape our country and make things better. It's also important to be involved because, whether we realize it or not, our community is what raises us and teaches us how to be leaders. So we should want to give back so we can continue to bring out strong leaders from our community.