

Gun Violence a Lingering Problem in Thokoza

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27 September 2024

Gun violence is a serious and unpleasant problem that we as a community of Thokoza are struggling with. We often hear about stories of people killed by gunmen. Statistically, many of the guns that used to commit crimes are unlicensed. This situation has become life-threatening, people no longer feel safe in their own homes.

The lingering feeling of unsafety in the township has been ongoing for quite some time. And yet, no action has been taken to address it and provide help for community members. In an interview with Mr Mhlophe about this issue in Thokoza, we learned that he also owns a gun.

The Phola Park taxi driver, Mr Mhlophe, mentions that in his line of work, especially for the time by which he must start working, he needs to protect himself.

"I own a gun so [that] I can be able to protect myself when I am going to work because it is not safe anymore, I don't threaten people with it," said Mr Mhlophe.

The community member also stated that the gun problem is probably caused by irresponsible people who think owning a firearm gives them the right to threaten people's lives. Mr Mhlophe says he also does not feel safe even though he owns a gun. This is because gun violence puts everyone's lives in danger even when inside their own homes.

In Thokoza, over the last two years, almost every weekend there has been an incident involving the use of guns. Sadly, this usually results in the loss of life.

Mr "White", as he calls himself, further says he would recommend for people to acquire guns because of the inappropriate use of guns has now become a disruption to the community.

"Imagine being home with your family after a long day of work, school, or whatever activity of the day, only to come back to a community where you constantly must watch your back or even your neighbour's, in this case. This is most definitely not the South Africa we once dreamt of," observed the taxi driver.

"Nawe ungumuntu wesifazane uyasidinga isibhamu", said the gun owner, Mr White, (Loosely: "As a woman, you also need a gun")

It is unfortunate that in our community where it is supposed to be a safe space, it is not, and it is our reality. This is a democratic country that we fought for, it would be amazing if everyone operated from the same standpoint, towards peace and safety.

Now that we are here, as per Mr Mhlophe's recommendation, if you happen to get a firearm, do it the right way.

We as the community members of Thokoza should push the police to do their jobs to save lives. We should also create some community volunteering for safety, to reduce gun violence, especially in places where more people gather for partying, mostly our youth. We should do it ourselves to reduce gun violence.

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