HOW ADVOCATES RAISED CONSCIOUSNESS AND TOPPLED A BILLBOARD

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On Sept. 2, 2015, Doris Schwartz saw the Kenneth Cole billboard...

...as she drove along the Henry Hudson Parkway in NYC.

Doris immediately launched a campaign to take it down!
The billboard falsely linked mental health conditions with violence!
Doris reached out to the advocacy community via email. Many responded!

- A listserv quickly grew.
- Advocates began to:
  - Brainstorm
  - Identify key Kenneth Cole players
  - Contact the KC organization & the Governor, and publicize “Billboard-gate,” via:
    - Phone
    - Email
    - Twitter
    - Facebook
    - Press release*

*Written by MHASP and paid for by NYAPRS
Advocates Fought Back with Facts

- The vast majority of individuals with mental health challenges are **no more likely to be violent** than anyone else.
- We are **more than 11 times more likely** to be the victims of violence.
- “Mental Illness Is the Wrong Scapegoat After Mass Shootings.”
Advocates Cited Studies

- Study of 171 countries found U.S. had by far the highest number of public mass shooters: 90 between 1966 and 2012.
  - The U.S. has less than 5 percent of the world’s population, but
  - The U.S. had 31 percent of mass shootings in that 46-year period.
  - (The researcher used the FBI’s definition of mass murder: four or more individuals killed.)

- The prevalence of serious mental health conditions is about the same around the globe but the incidence of mass shootings is much higher here.
...and more studies

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, there were almost 120,000 gun-related killings between 2001 and 2010, and few were by individuals with mental health conditions.
Another study found that “higher populations, more stress, more immigrants, and more mental illness didn't correlate with more gun deaths.”

- The study found that the states that had the tightest gun control laws had fewer gun-related deaths.
Advocates Offered Solutions!

**Gun control** is the answer!

_A Connecticut report_ after the Newtown tragedy found: “Those countries that have **tight gun controls** in general experience less overall gun violence and have fewer episodes per capita of mass shootings.”
Why We Need Stronger Gun Control Laws

- On average, 31 Americans are murdered with guns every day and 151 are treated for a gun assault in an emergency room every day.
- Every day on average, 55 people kill themselves with a firearm, and 46 people are shot or killed in an accident with a gun.
- The U.S. firearm homicide rate is 20 times higher than the combined rates of 22 countries that are our peers in wealth and population.
- A gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used to kill or injure in a domestic homicide, suicide, or unintentional shooting than to be used in self-defense.

Click on The Brady Campaign for these statistics.
We Discovered Allies!

The billboard “provides the gross misimpression that people with mental illness are violent.”—APA president Dr. Renee Binder
Some APA Tweets to @mr_KennethCole

- **American Psychiatric @APAPsychiatric** Does @mr_kennethcole think mental illness and guns are linked? Ur billboard-U-linked them. We urge you to fix it. #givestigmatetheboot

- **Renée Binder, MD @ReneeBinderMD** Here's my blog post where I urge @mr_kennethcole to take down his billboard and #givestigmatetheboot [http://tinyurl.com/ow79kba](http://tinyurl.com/ow79kba)
"They are calling these individuals 'The Courageous Class,'" Schwartz said, "and I'm certain they are; but there is no one more courageous than those of us who openly disclose our struggles with a mental health condition and fight to overcome the prejudice and discrimination that accompany a mental health diagnosis.

“I'd love to see Kenneth Cole include one of us in his fall/winter 2015 campaign.”
We suggested replacing the bad message with a good message!

- [@mr_kennethcole](https://twitter.com/mr_kennethcole) Ppl w/a #mentalhealth condition are brave & beautiful! Pls add one of us to your Courageous Class! #givestigmatheboot

- Same 2 U!* Also wishing U would add a person w/a #mentalhealth condition to your Courageous Class! #givestigmatheboot

- [@mr_kennethcole](https://twitter.com/mr_kennethcole): "Don't judge and discriminate against ppl w/#mentalillness until you have walked a mile in their (Kenneth Cole) shoes!“

*This was in response to a Kenneth Cole tweet wishing people a Happy Rosh HaShanah.*
"In hindsight, we were overly ambitious with our attempt to address two complex issues in a medium designed for brevity, and regret any confusion it has caused. The billboard on the West Side Highway will be replaced."

— Kenneth Cole spokeswoman in an email
Kenneth Cole Invitation!

The Kenneth Cole organization has invited us to suggest individuals with lived experience as models for their spring campaign!
And @mr_kennethcole is sort of trying!

- He tweeted: “There is no proof that Mental illness promotes #GunViolence, but universal Gun access does. #GunReform @Bradybuzz”
- But he included a photo of the original billboard in the tweet!
Where do we go from here?
Resources

 National Mental Health Consumers’ Self-Help Clearinghouse
  http://www.mhselfhelp.org

 Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion
  http://www.tucollaborative.org