

Hunting and target shooting are timeless sports. Rifles are passed from generation to generation, with engravings that attest to their vast history. It is the epitome of tradition. Shooting sports cultivate relationships and mentorship, while developing skills that can be utilized throughout a lifetime. However, participation in these valuable sports is disproportionately underrepresented in minority demographics. The mechanism behind this correlation is complex, occurring due to social, cultural, and environmental differences between groups. Regardless of the causal factors that contribute to this trend, the solution is concise: increasing accessibility to promote more equitable shooting sports. The key to increasing accessibility among underrepresented groups begins with the youth population. This requires the development of youth hunting and shooting programs in communities that are underrepresented in the sport. I introduce three phases to retain, expand, and diversity participation in hunting and target shooting among non-traditional groups: firearm education programs, hands-on learning, and accessibility to hunting grounds and facilities.

The first stage to expand hunting and shooting involvement in minority and underrepresented groups is firearm education. As the population of racial and ethnic minorities is highest in urban communities, these regions are the primary location to begin promoting youth involvement (*Rural America at a Glance, 2018 Edition*). For this reason, I propose the development of a free firearm education course that is affiliated with schools and community centers in urban regions. These courses consist of weekly classes to allow youth in the community to gain education about firearm handling practices. The program would teach individuals about how to operate firearms, safety precautions, as well as guidance about hunting licensure.

The second phase is hands-on learning. After completing the firearm education course, students must be able to apply their knowledge under close supervision. This requires the

establishment of a facility where individuals can learn how to operate a rifle in a controlled environment. Such rifles would be localized to a fixed position with limited range of motion. This would allow the novice students to gain experience handling and shooting a rifle without posing a threat to themselves or their peers. By creating a controlled environment, the young students can gain exposure to firearms while applying the education that they received in their prior education classes. Furthermore, it would allow the students to learn directly under the supervision of trusted mentors.

The third phase requires providing accessibility to shooting ranges and hunting grounds for individuals in urban communities. A possible contributing factor to the disproportionate involvement in hunting and target shooting among minority groups is the lack of accessible locations to engage in hunting and target shooting. This is the final—and most important—phase of the program. This would provide transportation for students in metropolitan communities to travel to locations where they can engage in hunting and shooting in a more rural setting. For example, the program may provide transportation for biweekly day-long trips to nearby rural towns. The destinations may be hunting grounds or trap shooting ranges. This allows individuals in urban communities to hone their skills and further develop a passion for the sport.

The aim of the three-phase program is to promote inclusivity within shooting sports by increasing accessibility for young minority populations in urban regions. As the geographical location of these communities limits the exposure to hunting and shooting, the program provides necessary mentorship and resources to overcome such barriers. Through education, hands-on learning, and increased accessibility to practice skills, the three-phase program expands the passion of shooting sports into historically underrepresented minority populations.

Works Cited

Rural America at a Glance, 2018 Edition. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/90556/eib200_brochureformat.pdf?v=5925.4