



# *Do the Write Thing*

## *Canton*

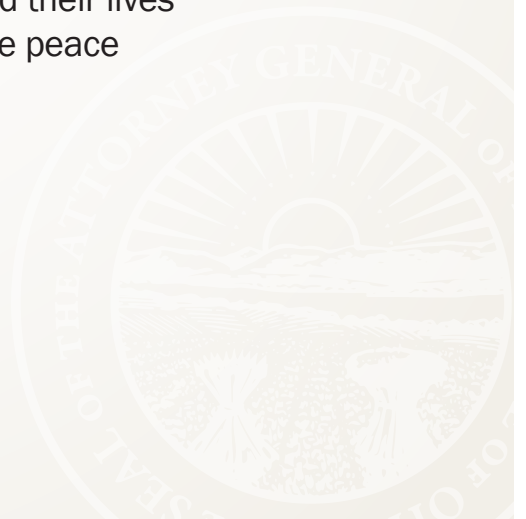


# 2024

**Canton City School District**  
middle-schoolers share how  
violence has touched their lives  
and how they choose peace



**DAVE YOST**  
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



# FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

As Ohio's Attorney General, I am so pleased to have partnered with the Canton City School District in the *Do the Write Thing* program for the third year in a row.

Once again, Canton students were asked to write about how violence impacts their daily lives and to share their ideas of how to reduce violence in their community. They tackled the difficult subject with candor, thoughtfulness and insight beyond their years.

These essays always amaze me and bolster my belief that the young students who soon will inherit and guide our nation are filled with goodness and compassion.

Their words are powerful and their stories sometimes difficult to read, but their perspective is invaluable to the community. These students are our future, and we must listen to their voices to gain a better understanding of the world they live in and how we can work together for a brighter tomorrow.

I commend these young people for their honesty, courage, and commitment to making the world a better place.

I encourage everyone to take time to read the essays in this book. You may be surprised by what you learn, but I know it will leave you proud and optimistic about the generations to come.



Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Yost". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**DAVE YOST**  
Ohio Attorney General

# FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

More than 1,105 students from the Canton City School District participated in this year's "Do the Write Thing" Challenge. These students had group discussions with their teachers and fellow classmates about how youth violence affects them, then wrote a personal essay or poem describing how violence impacts their daily lives. They were also asked to explore the causes of youth violence in our city and what they could do to reduce it.

In Ohio, the national program is sponsored by Attorney General Dave Yost and his staff, and Canton City School District appreciates this opportunity and creative outlet for our students. Sharing their experiences and ideas in their own voices helps encourage others to address challenges and resolve problems without conflict and violence. It's an initiative that will have a positive impact on all of us for years to come and a reminder that our future leaders are already developing strong, clear voices that deserve to be heard.



To our students, I offer sincere appreciation for sharing your honest and raw submissions. Writing is a positive and healthy outlet to work through feelings and thoughts about personal experiences. You are already making an impact by expressing yourselves and sharing your passion and courage through these written works.

Thanks also to our teachers and staff for guiding the students in their writings. Your support and empathy for those who have bravely shared their thoughts and experiences about violence in their lives and in our community is appreciated and meaningful.

Congratulations to our finalists and to our two winners. I look forward to the two ambassadors representing us in Washington, D.C., and learning more about other perspectives on the causes and effects of violence and how we all can work to reduce it in our community.

Sincerely,

**JEFF TALBERT**  
Superintendent  
Canton City School District

# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This book contains a compilation of writings by middle-school students who were selected as the top 20 finalists of the 2024 *Do the Write Thing* program. This book will be shared across the community in recognition of all the students who accepted the challenge to share their voices and help create a safer, more peaceful society.

## Overview of Do the Write Thing

*Do the Write Thing* is a unique national program designed to give middle-school students an outlet to communicate in classroom discussions and then in writing how violence impacts their daily lives. In addition to exposing the causes and effects of violence, students are asked to share their ideas on reducing violence in their community.

The program asks students to express in stories, poems and songs, or in any other written forms, the violence they've faced, with an emphasis on exploring these key questions:

- How does violence affect your daily life?
- What are some of the causes of youth violence in your community?
- What can you as an individual do to reduce youth violence in your community?

The benefits of the challenge are many. Students gain a greater empathy and understanding for victims of violence and realize that their positive actions can make a difference in their own homes, schools and neighborhoods. Teachers gain a better awareness of what is happening in their students' lives and in the school culture. Community leaders benefit from greater understanding of the impact that violence has on youth and learn from the students' stories and ideas for reducing violence.

## Do the Write Thing in Canton

During the 2023-24 school year, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost partnered with the Canton City School District for the *Do the Write Thing* program. The program was well received, with 1,105 seventh- and eighth-grade students submitting essays.

Canton community and business leaders volunteered their time to read each essay and chose the 20 submissions most responsive to the key questions. From the top 20, two students were selected to become Ohio ambassadors to the national *Do the Write Thing* conference in Washington, D.C.

A special thank you to all of the community volunteers, teachers, principals and school administrators who helped make *Do the Write Thing* such a great success in Canton.



*Do the Write Thing is the flagship program of the National Campaign to Stop Violence and has been in existence for 29 years. It operates programs in 28 cities in 14 states. Over the past 29 years, more than 1.5 million middle school students have submitted writings to the program.*

*The primary sponsor for the Do the Write Thing program is the Kuwait-America Foundation.*



## ESSAY 1

# MYKEIGH BROAD

STEAMM Academy

Many of us have thought about how violence is taking over the world, but why does it feel like nothing is ever done? I've always told myself, "I can't change someone who's not want to be changed." Although it's true, I still have to try. Youth violence is a popular thing because instead of talking about our problems we resolve to violence. To help spread awareness about youth violence, I'm going to be telling you my personal story with youth violence, the undertaking of youth violence, and how I would minimize youth violence in my community. Youth violence has many different effects and outcomes on people. I will be telling you what Youth violence is and what it means to me and to others, then I'm going to be telling my personal story on youth violence, and finally I'm going to be telling you what causes youth violence and what we can do to prevent it in not only my community but others also.

To start off, Youth violence is a serious matter that people all around the world have experienced. Youth violence is fighting and bullying at a young age. According to my sources, "Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24." This actively demonstrates that youth violence is not a emotional or verbal conflict, it is a physical conflict. For the exact purpose of example: your walking through the halls to get to your next class and you see someone getting pushed around by a popular bully. That is youth violence, we shouldn't have to resolve to physically attacking each other to get what we want. To sum up everything that's been stated so far, Youth violence is fighting or bullying from ages 10-24.

I'm willing to share my story on youth violence, not to get attention but to show everyone that this is a serious matter and it is a real thing. My childhood friend had recently came back into my life. Him and his mom didn't have a place to stay, so we offered them to come live with us till they got back up on their feet. He started dating one of my best friends for a bit, they soon enough ended it. During the time of them dating he had gotten mad at me once and he got in my face like he wanted to fight me, my mom stopped him immediately. After that everything was

so good at first, everyday of the summer was like a party, we stayed up late, walked the streets, played with random stray orange kittens we would find. Until the fun finally came to a stop. They started arguing over something so little. He got in his ex girlfriend's, my friend's, face so she did what she thought was best to do in that situation, she pushed him back and told him to stay out her face. Mind you this is not the only time he had gotten in her face and called her horrid names. Then when my mom came back from work she asked what had happened because my friend was crying, my friend told my mom what had happened. My mom had addressed the situation by asking everyone's side of the story.

My other friends' stories aligned with not only mine but my friends. When my mom told him that he shouldn't have addressed the situation like that especially if it was over something so small. He got in my moms face, telling her to get out of her house, so my mom pushed him back telling him to stay out her face. Then he said he was going to get his little sister to fight my friends and I called my brother scared he was going to get aggressive towards my friends, my mom, my friends mom, and I. My brother came from my aunts and they ended up fighting, now we are at court fighting so my brother doesn't go to the juvenile detention center. It was really scary for me witnessing my brother and my childhood friend who I had spent all summer with, fight in front of my face. It was even worse when he looked at me like he hated me with every bit of his soul. I soon realized that if he was my friend he wouldn't have acted out the way he did, and he definitely wouldn't have acted like he was bigger than us. To sum up everything that's been stated so far, I shared my experience on Youth violence because it's something that is serious and needs to change.

Finally, we should be preventing Youth violence, the main source of Youth violence are domestic violence or abuse towards children. According to my sources, "Children who live with violence in the home learn by example and can become violent people as they grow up." This activity demonstrates that, children who have experienced trauma with abuse or domestic violence are more likely to become



**Do the Write Thing participants from STEAMM Academy, from left: Kyelin West, Dameion Fowler, Xavier Lyon, Tajjah Haysmer, Sanaa Newman and MyKeigh Broad.**

aggressors in Youth violence, but that is not always the case. Some children see this behavior when attending school or have anger issues. To prevent Youth violence from happening we must understand and address the factors that people put at risk for or protect them from violence. To sum up everything that has been stated, the main source for Youth violence is if abuse is happening at home.

All in all, Youth violence has had a negative effect on my life and other peoples lives, my community has always been suffocated by Youth violence. My story shows how Youth violence has impacted not only my life but also

my mothers and my brothers lives. Youth violence can cause many problems like fights, permanent injuries and even death. Youth violence can come from anyone ages 10-24. Don't underestimate how youth violence can take over your life and others, even if your not a part of youth violence it is in your community and it would help spread awareness about youth violence. Youth violence may not be in your life or community, but it would help not only me but other people all around the world if you would help us stop Youth violence. I hope my essay will help you understand that this is a real matter and help us spread awareness all over the world.



## ESSAY 2

# JAMIER DUNBAR

Crenshaw Middle School

I have experienced violence in my community, at school, and at home. In my community, I have witnessed a lot of fights that could have ended someone's life. For example, I was at a high school and there was a fight. Someone had pulled out a gun and I ran because I saw a lot of people running. I was terrified because I could have lost my life because it happened right in front of me. At school, I have also experienced violence. For example, I was at a high school football game. At the end of the game, the football players were shaking hands and then they started to fight. I have also witnessed another fight where a gun was pulled out. I was not that scared, but I ran away as fast as I could. At school there was violence not too long ago. There had been a couple of fights this school year, and I wasn't scared because the teachers did a very good job breaking it up and clearing the hallways. I have also experienced violence at home. For example, I witnessed a car accident right in front of my house. I felt bad for the people that it happened to because their car just stopped and hit the other, and people could have been hurt.

Some causes of youth violence in my community are diminished economic opportunities and street justice.

According to Very Well Family, "when teens live in socioeconomically challenged neighborhoods, they may feel their only option for survival is to join a gang or to engage in violence." Also according to Very Well Family, "street justice is in response to the lack of police protection in some neighborhoods. When this happens, teens may attempt to secure the neighborhood by using violence as a way of bringing order to the area. As a result, youth violence often manifests as gang violence, turf wars, and any other type of violence."

I can help reduce youth violence in my community by bringing them together and stopping all the violence. One way I can reduce violence is by having community events such as park takeovers, giveaways, block cookouts and more. I can also host summer jobs for the kids, for example, you have to be at least thirteen or older the summer job will be watching kids for a couple hours. The last way to bring my community as one is to keep the kids away from violence by teaching them how to choose the right people to hang around.



### ESSAY 3

# DAMEION FOWLER

STEAMM Academy

Youth violence is a type of violence committed by people 10-24 years old. Things like gun violence, gang related and sometimes bullying. Youth violence has a big effect on us because there are many bullies all around the world. This is why young people commit suicidal behavior.

Youth violence effected my life because people have been bullied all around the world. One study found that violent video games not only escalate aggressive behaviors. My friend Jacob has been bullied for something that was not true from some brats down the street. That effected me because he is like a brother to me and that made me mad.

Some of the causes of youth violence in my community are gang violence and gun violence. According to the text, "youth violence often manifests as gang violence, turf wars, gun wars, and other types of violence." This explains that

these things are youth violence because people get shot up on new years and get jumped by gangs. This is why people die every single day.

I can tell their parents and then they will get punished and make them apologize. In the future, I am going to stand up for my friends and help them out when they need it. I think that they will have a better life and we will have a stronger friendship. I wonder if they will do the same for me.

People have bullied and been bullied. The community should come together and fight against youth violence. All those young people that have died and no one is doing nothing. I feel so bad for the people's parents when their family members died in youth violence. This is why I think that youth violence should not be tolerated.





## ESSAY 4

# TAIJAH HAYSMER

STEAMM Academy

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

In society violence is the most common answer to the majority of the world’s problems. In reality, the majority of the world’s problems are caused by the violence and if we started to feel frustrated or mad, we just took a step back to realize the true problem. To fix the problem we need to figure out how violence has affected our life, what are some of the causes of youth violence in our community, and finally what can you do as an individual, to reduce youth violence in our community.

Violence is all around us and it affects all of our daily lives. This is shown in our behavior and action. Some of these violent acts will change us as a person and our lives forever. This includes me. Violent acts have taken important people from me, and changed my perspective on life. Some examples of this are the fights that happen in our school. There are also Metal detectors because of the threats of the school being shot up and bomb threats, but not only does my school have them, most schools do nowadays. Another example of this is when I lost my god mom in 2020. When she went to a party at the age of 28 and the next day, she was found dead the causes of death was she was laced and was pronounced dead at the scene. no one ever was convicted of the crime because no one would say anything. If things don’t change soon we will never be able to come back from it because we grow up around it and this makes us believe it’s ok and that violence is the solution and it’s not we imitate what we see and one day when we have kids they will see the same stuff we grow up seeing this will cause the domino effect to continue and it will never end unless we do something about it now.

Youth violence is all around us in are communities, Some causes of youth violence in my community is, Bad home lives, bullying, and a lack of boundaries. A bad home life can make you more prone to outbursts, and this is because you see violence in your home and after a long time of you seeing that, it will make you think it’s ok to act the same way you see in your home. Next I’m going to tell you how bullying is contributing to youth violence. Bullying is overall a cause of youth violence, but when you add the fact that the person being bullied will one day get tired of it and lash out and then it causes more

violence in our communities. “Bullying can affect everyone — those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying. Bullying is linked too many negative outcomes, including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide.” This Shows why bullying is a problem and contributes to youth violence and how it doesn’t just affect the one being bullied, it affects the bully the one being bullied and the others around them who witnessed the bullying, and this is why if you see bullying than you should say something to a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, or an adult you know you can trust to help the situation. Doing this may seem like snitching but it’s not because snitching is telling on someone to get then in trouble, or to benefit yourself. But telling on someone to get help is different, that’s to help people for good. This shows how youth violence is all around my community and I bet it’s all around your community as well, this also shows why we need to make a change and soon.

You may be wondering how can you as an individual help with youth violence. First, if you have kids than teach them from a young age what consent is and how to say no and how to take “no” for an answer because, if you just watch how most parents teach their kid they wait to teach consent till the birds and the bees. Remember when you were a kid I bet you had family members or even family friends who would just grab you and give you a hug I bet you were uncomfortable, but if we all simply was taught consent than we wouldn’t have to feel like it’s ok to be in others personal space. Other ways you can help youth violence is explained the true effect of drugs and alcohol. Kids now days are desensitized to that stuff because we have all made it too common to encounter and children don’t realize how dangerous and addictive drugs and alcohol can really be so explain how it really affects their life and behavior because kids don’t see how dangerous it really is until it’s too late. For the children don’t let peer pressure get to you it will be hard, but if someone is peer pressuring you to do something you don’t want to than stand on that because you will regret it and it may be fun in the moment till the affects really hit you than it’s too late. If you feel this will happen to you, then try your best to distance yourself from that person or those people.

To sum up all that has been stated, violence affects me and you. We all see youth violence in our communities, and there are ways as individuals that we can do to help. If we all work together than we could fix our communities and make it a safe place for everyone again.



## ESSAY 5

# KENNY HOOBLER

Crenshaw Middle School

Violence is something everyone experiences or witnesses, and affects everyone. It is important to discuss these topics, and bring to light the damage it causes and how we can stop it. I have experienced violence myself throughout my life, and that's something I will be talking about. I am trans, which means I identify as a boy. There are many reasons on how I am affected by this, but just one of them is my name. My preferred name is Kenny, but it's hard to get that through to some people in school. When some kids find out about my deadname, they tease me for it after I tell them repeatedly to stop. Other forms of violence I experience is seeing the anti trans laws being talked about, social media talking down on transgender people, and just seeing all the transphobia going on in general. There are so many ways I've experienced violence aside from being trans, especially in school. I am typically pretty quiet and like to do things alone, which leads my peers to think I'm weird. They tease me for being a good kid, and sometimes even call me "sped." While it is true that I could be neurodivergent, it certainly isn't nice to hear that being said to me. Seeing how this violence affects other people breaks my heart, and we need a way to stop this.

The causes of youth violence could be many reasons. One of the big things I've noticed is the fact that kids are uneducated, leading them to bully others for things they don't understand. For example, transphobia only exists because certain people can't seem to wrap their head around the idea of other people changing their gender. This doesn't only apply to the LGBTQ+, though. Some people may have interests that are considered "cringe", or act a way that could also be considered that way. A big, big problem I see is how autistic people are so demonized. The things I've mentioned before are often associated with autistic traits, and a lot of people don't seem to realize that. People will say they support autistic people, but as soon as an autistic

person shows traits of autism its suddenly "cringe" and those people need to "grow up." Violence would decrease by a mile if we just educated ourselves on the things we see as weird. Apart from being educated, a lot of kids just don't seem to care. They don't care if they are hurting the other individual, and don't really face discipline for it. I feel like a lot of this would be prevented if parents of those bullies actually disciplined their child because parents play the biggest role in a child's life. If a parent isn't trying to prevent the problems their kids have, that child is only going to continue to bully their peers without a care. There are many more reasons of how youth violence could be caused, but those were just a few.

There are many ways I, as an individual, could prevent this from happening. I could start an account on social media, and spread awareness of everything that goes on in my area. Spreading awareness could catch people's attention, and want to make a change themselves. I could also educate others on the things they don't know, so they won't misunderstand anyone. Educating others plays such a big part in making change, as so many people don't seem to know what they're talking about when they bully others. The last thing I could do is bring awareness to my oppressor's parents, and they would hopefully do something about their kid. Parents don't seem to realize that they need to discipline their child when they do something wrong, leading to so many acts of violence without a care in the world. A way this could stop is spreading that information to parents, hopefully motivating them to raise their children to be good kids. One last way I could prevent youth violence is informing the adults in school or family members of what goes on around me. This would hopefully get adults to act on violence and cause a change in my environment and others.



## ESSAY 6

# LILLIANA JIMENEZ

Early College Middle School

My worries are meant to be soothed by such statement,

“Never to you, It won’t ever happen to you”

Yet still I am haunted with what I know happens

Never to me, Not yet to me,

But what could possibly, one day be me

I am haunted by the fear that one day it could be me

Fear pulls at my strings after what I see on the news, straining them...

I ponder on catching myself a cold to avoid what could possibly,  
one day, happen to me.

I look towards my peers and wonder who it could be

Who I should be wary of, who I shouldn’t,

Who is a bomb just waiting to go off at the softest brush of the shoulder

My stomach churns at the acknowledgement that bombs don’t make themselves.

A bomb needs a creator, someone to gather the materials and put them together,

Build them up...

I find myself getting lost within this thought process,

Not knowing whether to blame the bomb or the creator of the bomb for the destruction the bomb causes.

Despite all that bombs are created for, they can be diffused.

People have jobs dedicated to diffusing bombs,

Professionals who have committed their lives to saving the lives of those who could be harmed by bombs,

Yet bombs still continue to go off,

Creators of bombs continue to create,

And I still continue to be haunted,

Haunted with what has never happened to me,

Not yet has happened to me,

But could possibly, One day happen to me.



## ESSAY 7

# ALEXA JOHNSON

Crenshaw Middle School

In this essay I will be explaining the causes and effects of violence and youth violence. Have you ever been in a fight? That's violence, violence can be a very dangerous thing if you think about it. Violent actions can cause others to adapt to these feelings and surroundings and could turn out to become violent themselves.

Violence has affected my life because sometimes I walk through my school while people are fighting and it's loud and crazy, no one wants things to be loud and crazy. So it becomes the source of fear. Schools are supposed to be safe places, not places that make people feel worried or defenseless. School violence also takes a toll on the students behaviors, mental health, and their academics. According to Charlie Hahn, a Features Editor, "The increase in violence has already had a large impact on students' academic progress, and has caused more disruption and unfocused classroom behavior." What this means is that when fights happen during school hours children tend to want to focus more on that then they're coursework.

The causes of youth violence can vary a lot more than you think it might. A possible thing that can cause youth violence is the influence of social media. A child may see a video on TikTok of someone fighting and they may think that it's cool and then they'll try to copy it. A second cause could be neighborhoods and communities, if you live in a neighborhood where there's a lot of violence and your child is exposed to it they may pick up on violent tendencies. Another cause could be domestic violence and child abuse. According to Denise Witmer, "Children who live with

violence in the home learn by example and can become violent people as they grow up. They also are more likely to experience teen dating violence, either as a victim or an aggressor." This is important to know because it explains that even if the violence isn't directly happening to the child, they learn by example, so as they get older they get more aggressive. A fourth cause is drug and alcohol consumption. Teens engage in recreational drug and alcohol use to feel good, extended use of illicit drugs often brings about feelings of depression, anger, and frustration. These feelings can then lead to teens exhibiting feelings of aggression.

Ways schools can reduce violence are; To adopt physical security measures, what this means is to implement stronger security measures, including; surveillance cameras, security systems, campus guards, and metal detectors. Another way schools can reduce violence is Developing A Crisis and Emergency Plan. If a crisis occurs, students often go into a state of shock and forget how to react properly. To prevent this from happening in a real emergency, schools have adopted routine fire drills, evacuation, and lockdown drills. Very similar, developing and practicing a crisis and emergency plan to teach school personnel how to respond to questions, how to defuse dangerous situations (if applicable) and keep everyone safe during an incident.

For the reasons I listed these are some ways youth violence is caused, and how it can be stopped. Next time you see violence in your area, do the right thing and stop it. Violence is not the answer and certain precautions should be taken to prevent and avoid it.



## ESSAY 8 | AMBASSADOR

# NICK JONES

Early College Middle School

What is violence? The cause of conformity bias? An impulsive decision made by an individual with poor self-control? Maybe it's an action brought on by the desensitization of violence. We see it in almost all media, films, and music. It's ingrained into the minds of students ceaselessly. It'd be incorrect to blame parents for allowing their kids to watch movies depicting violence, even if they discourage their children from doing so, they may rebel, but these violent films could be desensitizing them to it. There's no way to live in this world without experiencing, witnessing, or participating in violence. Almost every student has learned about it in history class, heard music depicting brutality, and witnessed a fight. One could argue that playing sports is a type of violence. Would it be wrong to say that youth violence could be partly caused by this desensitization, and if it's not, what can we do about it?

Desensitization can cause an increase in violence. An experiment conducted by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) in the 2010s showed that when the young subjects were shown violent imagery for weeks, they were less anxious and showed increases of aggressive behavior when viewing violence. A cognitive structure called observational learning goes hand-in-hand with desensitization. When watching others participate in violent acts, our brains learn to respond to things violently. In 2016 the NLM conducted a similar experiment on male adolescents of color in Chicago. They found that desensitization is one of the main, and most dangerous, causes of exposure to violence. When youth are subjected to community violence, it can lead to violent perpetration, emotional numbing, normalizing violence, and violent impulsivity. They're in a violent environment and they feel they have to adapt to it to survive, and how they adapt is by being a part of it. All of this could be defined as desensitization. When in an environment where violence is prominent, these adolescents adapt to their surroundings by participating in or being torpedied to violence.

I have been affected by this numbing, and people in my family have adapted to violence. For most of my life so far I lived in a low-income area, due to many systemic faults, most low-income areas have a lot of violence. I would hear a lot of gunshots and shouts, it happened

so frequently that me and my family didn't react, it was normal for us. In my older siblings' school there were a lot of fights, one kid even ended up in jail for paralyzing someone. I distinctly remember one night, my family was in the living room and we heard a loud bang on the door and crying, it was a man's voice begging for us to open the door. From experience, we all knew not to open the door for anyone at night. He eventually left our porch. Talking to our neighbor the next day, we learned he was shot in the stomach and came to our house for help. He was probably in his early twenties. I don't know if he got help, or even survived. If this happened in another area, it'd be all over the news and everyone would be talking about it, but where I lived it was normal. I barely reacted; I was used to it. One time my family had to hide in the basement because someone was trying to break into our house, and he was armed. I was desensitized, and I still am.

When we moved I was surprised by the quietness. I was surprised by the minimal amount of fights because at my older siblings' middle school there was one every day. This unfamiliarity was oddly uncomfortable, at first I was confused as to why I felt this way. Shouldn't I be glad I no longer live in a violent environment? But my brain was so adapted to that area that living in a place where violence isn't the norm made me uncomfortable. I was so desensitized—I saw violence as normal and a part of everyday life—that I thought it was abnormal that there wasn't violence every day. Even in this school where there aren't as many fights as my past residence, the kids are desensitized and probably don't even realize it. On the date of writing this, there was a fight, after a few minutes people were barely discussing the actual fight. I'm certain that I'm not un-desensitized yet, I witnessed the fight alongside many of my classmates and I didn't react, I felt neutral. I haven't witnessed a fight this school year, so a part of me expected it to happen sooner or later.

Desensitization may be a trauma response. According to the University of Maryland Medical System, trauma is your emotional response to an upsetting event and when you experience trauma you often have a trauma response that you may or may not be aware of. One could suggest that desensitization could be a way that we react to the



trauma of witnessing violence by becoming numb to it and even participating in it. Like many trauma responses it doesn't last forever. This mass desensitization of youth isn't irreversible. To solve this problem, we should become aware of it. According to the Iowa University Human Resources, the first step in solving a problem is defining it. Sharing with peers about how they may be desensitized to violence is a good way of potentially reversing the effects of desensitization. Merely acknowledging the problem won't completely solve it. An article published in 2021 by Yasmin Al-Zubi explains ways individuals can reverse violence desensitization. Staying away from violence could prevent desensitization and even reverse it, but that's implausible. A majority of people who witness, experience, or participate in violent acts are minors, so they can't exactly move out or switch schools on their own. They can separate themselves from violent peers and, if the Cleveland Clinic is correct, they can diminish the effects of desensitization by simply meditating or partaking

in calming activities. If desensitization has affected the individual to the point that they no longer feel during a traumatic event, therapy may be something to consider, but it is not necessary all of the time. We could stop making it a predominant part of the media, but that is a societal issue that would be difficult to execute.

There are many causes of youth violence and violence in general, but it would be ignorant to deny desensitization as a possible reason for a substantial cause of youth violence. Youth violence has affected my life in a significant way causing me to become sort of numb when subjected to it. I'm not alone in this, I've noticed desensitization is in my peers, family, and society. Luckily this numbing may be reversible of course with self-care and possibly therapy. Youth violence is a glaring issue in the United States, in 2020 alone 78% of the arrests involved youth. If we wish to reduce youth violence in our communities, schools, and within ourselves, we should spread awareness and heal minds.

## Work Cited

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## ESSAY 9

# JAZANEE JONES

Crenshaw Middle School

Violence has affected my life because my stepfather abuses my mother in front of me. One day, my stepsister and I were playing on this called Monkey. Monkey is an app where you can meet people just like you and chat. When we finished playing our parents came back, my mom and my step dad. They came into the house screaming at each other because my mother was talking to her friend and my step dad was mad at her. My stepsister was supposed to stay over and have a sleepover, but her dad (my stepdad) told her to get her stuff and get in the car. We were both really upset because we didn't know how long it would be before we saw each other again. My mom was trying to convince him to let her stay and let her play with me because she was having a good time, but he made her leave anyway. My step dad told my stepsister to wait in the car and he would be out in a minute. While she waited in the car, he started yelling at my mom again and my mom finally kicked him out of the house. He called my mom the B word and slammed the door. The next thing I know, he was banging on the door and when my mom opened it, he rushed into the house and started pounding on my mom. Then, he put his knee on her neck and she couldn't breathe. I started crying and told him to get off of her, but he told me to shut up and stop crying which made me even cry more. I was only 6 years old at the time and I didn't know what to do. I was going to call the police when I saw my mom's phone on the floor. I was going to grab it until he snatched it away and went outside and went into the street. He slammed her phone on the hard, rocky ground and stomped on it making it crack even more and then he left. It affected me because watching mother get beat on scared me and and it hurt to see her in pain and knowing I couldn't help her. I could've called the police but I was too upset to move at all and I was so little. As you can see, violence has affected my life because I saw my mom get beat up by my step dad.

One cause of youth, violence is community risk factors. The reason why I picked this risk factor is because I don't feel comfortable in my neighborhood.

People drive by all the time trying to talk to teenagers or underage kids all the time. It hurts deep inside to know what the world is actually about, we are kids, girls and boys and we are not safe in our own homes. The community risk factor is where teens/adults have to feel like they have to survive in their own neighborhood, and the only thing we can do

is survive. All these things shouldn't never happen to a kid or an adult. Every old man or woman rides up on them and asks them if they want candy or anything a kid would want and desire, that's why parents teach their children "do not talk to strangers". No parents should have to go through trauma making sure their child doesn't get kidnapped by some stranger who walks up to the poor child. One day when I was 13, I was walking home in my mind ... I'm walking home alone because my house is far from my house. And my mother has to work and no one's home yet besides I can get in with a key though, I was very pretty during the spring, I had new clothes, new shoes and everything so I wore this cute skirt to school and had this pink dress on and my pink shoes. I'm almost to my house and I see from the corner of my eye someone staring at me so I call my sister and start talking to her and walking as fast as I can to get home as soon as possible.

I finally got down and talked to my sister about what happened. It's another story to be told, I was walking home again in this story and I was almost to my house and I saw this car pull up beside me and it was an old guy asking me if I wanted a ride. And that's how causes of youth violence affects me and never talk to strangers.

One thing we can do to prevent youth violence is to tell an adult or police officer or set up a neighborhood watch or community patrol working with the police. I feel like more kids would talk to strangers than anybody else. I mean they are kids they don't understand or know any better like me. I'm just a kid but I know better now since I lived with it before. It made me insecure about myself because of all the nasty old men looking for random kids, grownups, whoever they want and it's unsettling to even think about it and scary. This is a bad trauma even for adults with their children.

Like me, for example, one day I got off my bus but my bus was waiting for me to get home, I was just 11 walking like a happy little girl I am and next thing you know this boy calls me over telling me to come get some McDonalds.

Of course I said no cause I wasn't hungry and my mom told me not to take anything from strangers at all, and I didn't cause I'm not trying to get taken by men that have their shirts off asking if I want some food. That's why you always tell an adult or police member what's going on when you are in danger or feel uncomfortable or feel like you are a wanted victim so they can help you and keep you safe at all times.



## ESSAY 10

# KNYTYA LAMAR

Early College Middle School

This story starts back in November of 2017. I was living with my birth mother who was on and off drugs

I would go to my fathers every weekend. My moms house there were no lights and barely any food and her husband was terrible to her, but she stayed because she loved him. My dads house felt like a different life. They always had food and lights for my siblings and lots of love. My dad and stepmom had worked so hard to get where they are. He was my favorite person in the world. I was daddy's little girl you could say. Until he wasn't. He was all good up until about 2020. Once quarantine hit he was feeling deprived I guess. He would yell and shout at my mom and call her out her name, and sometimes he would hit her, and tell her he would kill her.

This became progressively worse by the summer of 2021. Every time they argue we would go to this park funny how it is down now but, he would start to threaten us too. And would say very out of pocket things to me. He would call me fat and say "you look like you have a tire around your belly". One day he sat me down and had a conversation with me about selling my body for money. He said it would be the "easy way out". The things people do for money.

Over time he got violent with me and my sister. One night when we were asleep he called us down stairs in our robes and told us to lay on the ground with our belly's to the floor. With my mom and said he would kill us and then kill her to then kill himself. That day I never saw

my dad the same. I didn't feel like he loved me. I didn't feel like I was really "daddy's lil girl" anymore. I felt like my life was on the line.

Fast forward to November 25 2021 it was thanksgiving. My dad didn't like us celebrating holidays and especially with my stepmom's family. But to me she was my mom and they are my family too so I went no matter what he said, then I came back and we argued for hours. He would say "we are the blacks, crackers ain't for us" and some more. Which made me feel like I was all alone.

That night I went to sleep mad because of what he said about what I felt was family blood or not. That's when I get a call at 3 am from my mom saying your aunt is comin to get you and your dad took your sister and is threatening her life. I sat up and cried. I wish I never went to sleep. I went to my aunt's house. They tried to make me sleep but I couldn't. I had too many questions. Was she ok? Was I really going to lose my sister? This was my fault, wasn't it? We got her back thankful and she was unharmed, scared but unharmed. Now I live with my stepmom and I never talked to my father again.

This just shows that violence has changed my life, and here is what you can do. There is always help. Don't bottle up your emotions and keep it pushing no matter how hard it is. Have a reliable family member or trusted adult to talk about these things. Everyone needs help sometimes but a quiet mouth does not get feed.





## ESSAY 11

# CANDICE LEE

Crenshaw Middle School

I have never experienced violence before, but I know some of my friends have. My friend's sister would always hit her and throw stuff at her. When she told me about it, she told me not to tell her mom, but I had to tell her because I didn't want my friend to get hurt anymore. After I told her mom, she has never gotten hurt from her sister. The next day my friend ran to me, hugged me, and thanked me for telling her mom because she was tired of her sister bullying her and hurting her. Her older sister did have anger problems so that's what triggered her to throw stuff at her and to bully her. But my friend has been through so much with her sister. Her sister has been like that ever since my friend was born and we finally told her mom in 2023. So after I told her mom, her mom was so proud of her because she chose good friends that care for her. Her mom was also proud that me because I told her, my friend's mom was wondering why she had bruises on her. My friend use to come to school every day and tell me what her sister would be doing to her when her mom is gone. But now my friend never come to school telling me that her sister was hurting her.

One of the causes of youth violence is mental illness. Mental illness can lead someone to ADHD, hyperactivity, and bipolar. Someone with bipolar can be more at risk to start using drugs because of the issues happening. If a teen

starts to be violent, the drug use could be hidden.

The fact is that bipolar illness is part of the cause. If you are treating the other person rather than just the symptoms, then you are more likely to reduce the risk of additional violent outbursts. Another cause of youth violence is toxic relationships and stress. Some difficulties are attention difficulties, which includes hyperactivity, conduct disorder, or other disorders.

Some things I can do to prevent youth violence is to tell a trusted adult that can help. I can also talk to them so I know more information about what is going on with their life and what is happening. This makes it so I can make sure nothing bad is happening to them. According to the text, it says "we can protect youth and support their growth into healthy adults." Another thing cited from the text is "certain factors may increase or decrease the risk of youth experiencing or perpetuating violent." I would go talk to her parents or a trusted person that we both know like her grandma, counselor, or principal. I would also frequently share activities with her family so they are always up to date. I would talk to teens and ask if there's anything I can do to support them. Other people and I should stick with our friends that are going through youth violence. We should be listening to and believing survivors.



## ESSAY 12

# ISIAHA LOUIS

Crenshaw Middle School

Violence has affected my life because I lost my uncle to gun violence and I almost lost my life to gun violence. It's scary knowing I could've almost lost my life that night.

The day I almost died was the scariest day ever and it still gives me nightmares. One day my friends and I were at the park at night time and some people started arguing because one person started talking trash about what gang they were in. My friends and I saw a guy backing up, he then pulled out a weapon and started firing it. The group of guys started to run towards my friends and me while the two groups were firing at each other. I got scared because my foot was stuck on the monkey bars and I couldn't move. The guys started getting closer and closer so I just ended up risking it and falling off the monkey bars. As I start to get up, two gunshots hit the pole right in front of me missing me by an inch. I got up fast and ran and jumped over the fence. My friends and I were like track stars that day. This affected me because I almost died that night, so every time I hear something pop I think of that gunshot noise and how I almost lost my life over something stupid. This event has made me pay attention to where I'm at and what I do at all times. As you can see violence has affected my life

One cause of youth violence is involvement in gangs. When kids are growing up in bad areas, they see a lot of gangs holding weapons thinking it's fun or cool. Then that inspires them to be part of a gang. Children think being involved with gangs is fun until they see the consequences of being in one and then it is too late to get out. Often, gang members end up in jail or dead. Parents lose their

child and they are sad because they couldn't do anything to fix it or stop the gangs. In an article about gang involvement it says "joining a gang is like skydiving without a parachute." What that means is that anything that is risky and dangerous always starts out as fun but that doesn't mean it stays fun. Joining a gang is like skydiving without a parachute because you are going to die at the end. The quote helps show that the people that firing weapons are in jail or dead because they thought having weapons and being in gangs was fun. They risk their life and future for people who aren't gone to take care of them or their family. That is why parents should make sure their children don't see or know about gangs. This is why involvement in gangs is the cause of youth violence.

One thing we can do to prevent youth violence is have community violence prevention programs. Gangs are why so many young adults are losing their lives. Community leaders can work with residents and those impacted by violence. Showing young people who experience of violence another way to live. That would be good because a lot of people would try to prevent the violence and bring people together. A quote for community violence is "Putting others down doesn't raise you up." The quote connects to my cause because people involved with gangs like to talk trash to other and that gets the other gangs angry. They feel like they have to defend themselves after being disrespected and turn it into a big situation. This is why a prevention would help prevent youth violence because kids can learn how settle their problems and get involved in gangs.



## ESSAY 13

# XAVIOR LYON

STEAMM Academy

Did you know that 93% of school shooters planned their attack? Almost all mass school shooters shared threatening messages or images. You too can prevent school shootings when you know the signs. That is why school shootings are very important to watch out for. I believe that violence in a big problem in America, and in this essay I will be sharing how violence has affected my life, what some of the causes of youth violence are, and what I can do to reduce youth violence in my community.

Did you know that I was involved in violence too? When I was 7 I was on the bus and a kid said that they were going to track me down and kill my whole family. When I got home I told my mom and she called the school and got him suspended and I was removed from that school and put into a better school. That is why I think it is important to report things when you see or hear violence.

One of the causes of youth violence in my community is access to guns. According to the text it says, “These improperly stored weapons have contributed to school shootings, suicides, and the death of family members, including infants and toddlers.” (17 facts about gun violence and school shootings. <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/take-action/get-involved/>) That is why if you own a gun you should keep it in a safe spot where kids cannot get it. Some people in their youth are able to get hold of guns and may commit suicide, kill their parents, or shoot a school. That is why I think it is important to keep guns up in a safe

place and don't let your kids get them. Did you know that each day 12 children die from gun violence in America? Another 32 are shot and injured. According to the text, it states that “guns are the leading cause of death among children and teens.” (17 facts about gun violence and school shootings. <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/take-action/get-involved/>) One out of ten gun deaths is nineteen or younger. That is why I think nobody should own a firearm without a license. Did you know that guns used in about 68% of gun-related incidents at school were taken from home, a friend, or a relative? That is why if you see signs of a school shooting report it as soon as you can. Did you know that a(n) estimated 4.6 million American children live in a home where at least one gun is kept loaded and unlocked? That is why if you own a gun you should keep it in a safe spot where kids cannot get it.

What as an individual can do to lower youth violence is when I see a sign of gun violence, child abuse, or other violence, I will report them as soon as I can. That is why I think it is important to watch and understand if there is a sign or not. If a child is getting abused, tell an adult as soon as possible.

That is why school shootings are very important to look out for and when you see one report it as soon as possible. If you are ever involved in a school shooting, try to find out when and report it to the police, teachers, and security.



## ESSAY 14

# SANAA NEWMAN

STEAMM Academy

Imagine you are coming out of a store and about to get in your car, then suddenly someone comes up with a gun and claims that you did something you didn't do. You tell them that they have the wrong guy, but they can't hear you over their yelling, but of course they didn't believe it and still decided to pull the trigger anyways. That is what happened to my uncle, he lost his life to a young teen in August 2009. It was very hard for my family on my dad's side even my mother was hurt by it. Youth violence is a bad common problem in the US and maybe even all around the world. Throughout this essay I'll explain how it affected my family badly. Youth violence affected my family really badly by gun violence.

Firstly, the lack of police protection is a big problem with youth violence. The text states, "Additionally, research shows that youth can become a form of "street justice" in response to the lack of police..." The text also states, "As a result, youth violence manifests as gang violence, turf wars, gun wars, and other types of violence." This shows that the lack of police protection makes it easier for a teen to commit crimes. There are rarely any neighborhoods who are protected by police and those are where a lot of crime may happen. When in a neighborhood there will most likely be a group of people who are aggressive or violent, they set a bad example for teens and they'll start to copy, mimic, or even may look up to it. In conclusion, the lack of police protection is a big problem with youth violence.

Next, another problem in youth violence is the amount of bad parental supervision. According to the source, "when parents do not provide adequate supervision, teens are prone to engage in aggressive behaviors or criminal activity." The source also states, "without adult supervision, teens do not have the resources needed to make good choices or to recognize risk ... These teens tend to make friends with the wrong people." This shows that your parenting can affect how your children act in the future. Teens and kids need proper education, discipline, and overall a parent or older figure to be in their life. As a parent you should be engaged and interested in things your kid wants to do or is currently doing. If not that'll cause the child to gain mental issues or

gain depression, not feeling worth it/wanted because you may not pay attention to them or interact with them. All kids need appreciation and love from their guardian and if they don't get that they'll start acting out. In conclusion, another problem in youth violence is the amount of bad parental supervision.

Lastly, in youth violence, another cause can be abuse or domestic violence going on in the home or family. The text states, "Children who live with violence in the home learn by example and become violent people as they grow up." The text also states, "Being violent gives teens a feeling of power and control — something they lack at home ... Chaos in the home, neglect, and rejections are ways it leads to youth violence." This shows that most kids who may bully others and do other violent acts come from a home that is abusive. They don't have much control at home so once they see someone who may be weaker than them or they can take control of quickly they'll do it. This is why we as a society need to work on parenting before deciding to have kids. Your growing your kid up in an harmful environment where that's what grew up with or know. In conclusion, in youth violence another cause can be abuse or domestic violence going on in the home or family.

Youth violence affected my family really badly by gun violence. Youth violence isn't something to joke around with or praise, it actually hurts people and affects a bunch of families. There are a bunch of different causes as to why teens result to youth violence. Many things such as Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Media Influence, Bad Parental supervision, peer pressure, Drug And Alcohol Use, Traumatic Events, and lastly Mental health. This doesn't justify any of their actions, but at least take into consideration what they might be going through. Now remember that story of how someone got shot in a parking lot. That kind of stuff wouldn't happen no more if our community improved in parenting such as tending to your child, loving them, caring for them, and being understanding when it comes to them. We could also improve by possibly having more police in more neighborhoods or areas.



## ESSAY 15

# DANIKA SAFFELL

Early College Middle School

Violence everywhere  
everyday you see  
People physically fighting,  
seeing it somewhere you are  
people yelling at each other  
people arguing, getting physical

I see it everyday  
on tv and social media  
Hitting, punching, screaming, pulling, yelling

It never ends  
seeing it everywhere  
people screaming to stop  
other people, not caring  
to hurt them  
not knowing that  
you shouldn't  
Do that not  
caring what  
the consequences are

Practice lockdowns  
being scared of places  
Wanting to go to high school  
games, but having  
To go with an adult

Not knowing  
if something  
bad is going to happen  
while out  
people getting hurt at other schools

Walking through  
metal detectors in school  
so no one  
will bring violent objects

People not caring  
what they do  
destroying things  
yelling at people  
when mad  
not thinking of other people

Not thinking of what  
the outcome of hurting someone  
Would be  
mad and thinking to fight  
yelling at someone  
Because you don't like them

Before doing  
something think  
Of what the  
outcome would be

Overcoming violence  
by not yelling  
or fighting when someone  
Is mad  
think of other people's feelings

Get help when  
you are  
struggling with  
anger, frustration,  
and embarrassment,  
thinking of fighting

Violence is everywhere  
so that means you shouldn't be the cause  
of violence.  
You should be the person that  
helps prevent it!



ESSAY 16

MICAH SMITH

Early College Middle School



The Things I've Seen

I have seen and experienced violence.  
Emotional Violence.  
Physical Violence.  
I didn't feel safe at school.

I have seen and experienced violence.  
Once violence has corrupted you, it's hard to stop.  
You never know what can happen next.  
Once you hit your classmate, it's permanent.  
Your actions speak louder than your words.

I have seen and experienced violence.  
It comes in many different forms;  
Grief, Anger,  
Annoyance, Sadness,  
Bad influences.  
Peer Pressure.

Peer pressure.  
Maybe you see it a lot and feel like it's normal  
Like it's ok to hit someone  
It's not.

Guns, knives, fists, all the same.  
Violence.  
Shots fired.  
Punches thrown.

If you're going through something and you're angry about it,  
That doesn't mean to hit the person next to you.  
That doesn't mean to call the person next to you names.  
And that doesn't mean to take your feelings out on the next.

You never know what teens are going through  
push them too far it can end terribly  
"\*\*\*\*\* was found dead in her room"  
"it seems that she hung herself and left a note for her family"  
"the note says"  
"I'm sorry Mom and Dad, but I couldn't take it anymore  
so much was going on at school that you didn't know"  
"It's better this way"  
"Nobody but you two will care anyway"  
"Love - \*\*\*\*\*"

Guns, knives, fists, all the same.  
Violence.  
Shots fired.  
Punches thrown.  
Violence.  
Something no one should go through.

"It's too dangerous, stay."  
"Oh It's dark out you should stay inside."  
"Never let your guard down."  
"Hit back"  
"Always Defend yourself"  
All sentences due to violence.  
I have seen and experienced violence.

"Don't be a wuss", they say.  
"Just do it," they say.  
"If you don't get caught, you don't get in trouble," they say.  
"You'll be fine"  
"I do it. Why won't you?"  
Pressure. Peer Pressure.

Guns, knives, fists, all the same.  
Violence.  
Shots fired.  
Punches thrown.  
"It's just a joke"  
"It's not that big of a deal!"  
"You're too emotional."  
"I did that because I was trying to help you."  
"You're overthinking it."  
"This is your own fault."  
Gaslighting.  
"That's not what I said"  
"You're too sensitive"  
"You're overreacting"  
Manipulation.  
Guns, knives, fists, all the same.  
Violence.  
Shots fired.  
Punches thrown.

I have seen and experienced violence  
We can prevent youth violence by being active  
By being engaged,  
Active,  
Kind and compassionate,  
Being involved.

Take baby steps or big steps  
get to the solution.  
Violence isn't something anyone wants to go through  
Especially.  
Not.  
Teens.  
Be a better person and help change it.



## ESSAY 17

# KENDRA TICHENOR

**Bulldog Virtual Academy**

Did you know youth violence started to increase in the 1980s? But why did the youth violence count go up? There are multiple reasons why youth violence has started to increase such as peer pressure, and even social media. Youth violence started to up-rise simply because things were happening at home or in your neighborhood. I have been learning about youth violence and how I can help to stop it. Youth violence should be taken seriously because some people don't take it serious enough and that is not ok. Any violence is not acceptable. According to google "Youth violence has affected the world a lot. We have lost thousands of children not in just America all around the world. Worldwide over 176,000 homicides occur among youth 15–29 years of age each year, which is 37% of the total number of homicides globally each year". How many youth children we lose each year is insane.

How has violence affected my life? Violence has affected my life by making me scared of people and being worried about them. Where is one place where I am confronted by violence? Some different examples about how I'm confronted by violence in my community. Where I live there is a lot of youth violence and I try my best to stop it from happening. Another example about how I'm confronted by violence in my community is all of the fights that happen in my area. There are multiple ways that the youth people of America is confronted by violence anywhere in the world, not just America.

What are some of the causes of youth violence in my community? Some causes of youth violence in my community are race, genders, and even the way your body looks these things are repugnant and astonishing. Why might people make fun of these things? It could be because they are insecure or maybe even hate how they look so these are some things that affect youth violence in my community. People in my community do these things because they hate the way that they are and how they look. People are not like how they use to be.

What can I, as an individual, do to reduce youth violence in my community? What can I do to reduce youth violence? What I can do is maybe try to stop what I can see or hear. When you hear or notice youth violence you should always tell a trusted adult because they will do what they can to stop it. So as an individual person in my community is report whatever I can see so whoever as a youth person is trying to use violence on themselves the best thing to do is to tell a trusted adult.

In conclusion, I say that youth violence is very important and should be taken seriously. Youth population that experiences youth violence should be heard even adults should be heard who are going through violence. In the world there are too many children are experiencing youth violence and we need to do what we can to fix youth violence and help these people be heard. Lets help what is right and help these people suffering youth violence.



## ESSAY 18

# KYELIN WEST

STEAMM Academy



Youth violence is happening over the country and it's rising. More kids are getting influenced and worse things are happening. I personally know people who got influenced, and I learned from them and not what to do. Youth violence is an issue we have to stop because violence has affected my life, affected families around me in the community, and I as an individual can help stop it.

Violence affected my life and my family in a bad way and this has been happening for many years. Thankfully I had good peers around me and removed me from it. The violence at one point was very high in Canton and I was around it. I saw it with my own eyes and sometimes it scared me when I was younger not wanting to go to a certain house. It's important, It supports my thesis by explaining how violence affected my life and how it somewhat harmed me. The importance of my reason can help explain how I was affected and how others around the country. It supports my thesis, because it explains how it affected my life and others.

Families around me in the community have been affected by lives taken innocently for by the violence happening around all of us. The 2020 crime rate in Canton, OH is 687, which is 2.7 times greater than the U.S. average. It was higher than in 98.8% U.S. cities". This is showing lots of good people and families being affected from the violence going on. It's affecting lives, and people's safety are at risk. It's making the news being that violent. My evidence is important in explaining how violent our city can get and how it is expanding to the families around us. It is helping my thesis because the crime rate is happening all over the city. The importance of my second reason is supporting

my thesis by stating on how the crime rate around the city was very high and how it was affecting lots of families surrounding me.

I as an individual can try to partake in trying to help the youth violence going on around me. Teenagers can help stop violence by "Report any crimes or suspicious actions to the police, school authorities, and parents. Be willing to testify if needed". I can save hundreds or even thousands of lives if I am able to report anything from happening. If anyone can do this it's the best thing possible for the situation and saving lives. The importance of my third reason is reporting something alerting some adult so the situation can be handled and that people can be safe and hopefully feel more safe. It supports my thesis because I as an individual helped stop a situation that could've gone further worse.

Youth violence is an issue we have to stop because violence has affected my life, affected families around me in the community, and I as an individual can help stop it. The violence specifically affected me, because I saw it hand first and it affected me when I was younger, leaving me not wanting to do things and scarring me for a good amount of time. The violence started affecting families and innocent people around me showing how lots of good people and families are being affected from the violence going on. It's affecting lives, and people's safety is at risk. I can help the lives of people coming at risk by telling trusted adults and saving people lives from doing that. In conclusion, I think that there is still a lot of options available for us to stop the violence and we should trigger those options, for us people around and in the community feeling more safe.





## ESSAY 19 | AMBASSADOR

# CARLO VIROLA

Early College Middle School

*One day my cousin Man was going to the gas station to get some snacks. Man was confronted by a guy who seemed to have a problem.*

Guy: "Hey dude, come on, what are you doing?"

Man: "I ain't doing nothing, leave me alone!"

Guy: "Get out of here you don't belong, you know what, stay right there!"

(Guy goes to his car and grabs a gun.)

Man: Woah woah, chill.

Guy: Nah, you chose the wrong one!

(\*Bang!)

Man was seriously injured, he took a bullet to the head.

By the time he had gotten to the hospital by ambulance the rest of my family had heard the bad news. We all knew subconsciously that he could lose his life, but at that time we tried not to think about it.

*At the Hospital:*

(Doctor walks out)

(My cousins all look)

(Doctor frowns and delivers the worst news possible)

(My cousins weep)

Once we heard the news that he passed we were all sad for awhile. After a few days of mourning my family wanted justice. My mom has a lot of connections with people from News channels, Newspapers, etc. That led her to call some of them and she was able to have the story in newspapers and on the news. Luckily, after a period of waiting, the man who killed my cousin was found.

This is a short story that I made of how my cousin, whose name was Man, lost his life. This altercation at the gas station went way too far. At first, they were just arguing, but then a split second later, he has a bullet in his brain, and was on his way to the hospital. The fact that an argument can turn into a lost life is terrible. The thing that was even worse, is that he was only in his early twenties.

Gun Violence is just one example of youth violence in our world today. There are many other types of youth violence

such as drug violence, domestic violence, gang violence, and any form of bullying, just to name a few. Even though it would make it easier to stop youth violence if there was one specific thing to blame, it isn't that simple. There is a combination of factors that cause violence in youth. According to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), "A combination of individual, relationship, community, and societal factors contribute to the risk of youth violence." I have personally seen how different events in your life can lead you to turn to violence.

There has been a lot of drama in the house across the street from my house. There have been multiple renters gone mysteriously, police over weekly, and major raids yearly. It never seemed to be normal to me. Then one day, my mother and I went to the Black College Classic football game. It is a staple event that features Historic Black colleges battling in a football game to prove who is the best. We live very close to Tom Benson stadium so there were cars parked in yards all around our house. Since we lived so close, we decided to walk. During a sunny Sunday evening, like that day we would usually be outside relaxing, but instead me and my mother were at the game, and my family was inside napping. Once we got back from the game the members of the church across the street from our home came to check up on us and make sure we were ok. We were confused then they told us there was a shooting directly across the street. We didn't believe them but then they showed us a stray bullet that hit the church. We were still shook and watched our security camera's back. Little did anyone in my home know it was true! This is what we saw.

No one around

Quiet as a sound

One car pulls up

Another pulls out

Lady gets a gun

Other car's on the run

5 shots fired,

The plan was mis-conspired,

None of them hit,



**Do the Write Thing participants from Early College Middle School, from left: Micah Smith, Danika Saffell, Knytya Lamar, Carlo Virola, Nick Jones and Lilliana Jimenez.**

Their life, thrown in a pit,  
Almost out of range,  
The end of this exchange

I believe that if this event was inevitable, this was the best time it could have happen. No one was injured or killed. There were no cars around, and all of the people were inside. And I cannot say this for certain, but I heard that the young people shooting were once in a relationship. It must've ended badly so it led to violence. This was a extreme example of how relationships can lead to violence, and of violence that has occurred in my life.

Youth violence is not possible to completely prevent. It isn't even possible to slow down, unless we work together to stop it. We have to try and stop the problem at the beginning, which I previously stated can be a combination

of individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. So to reduce youth violence we have to reduce these problems. Which is not as easy as it seems. If we can all join together as one, it'll be much easier.

Overall, we cannot just blame the youth for violence. Sometimes we have to realize that they couldn't control their situation and if they were born into violence. We can try and prevent these violent communities to create places without as much youth violence. Finally I would like to end off with a quote by an American politician, lawyer, and activist Matt Gonzales. This quote is about youth violence and is very similar to what I was previously stating. The quote is this, "I think that when we're talking about youth violence, we're talking about kids who don't have opportunities, so they're engaged in a certain degree of lawlessness, because we as a society have failed them."

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## ESSAY 20

# DAVONTAE WILSON

**Bulldog Virtual Academy**

Have you ever wondered how violence can affect your life? Violence is sometimes used to get what they want. Violence can also mean aiming to hurt someone. Violence can affect you in many ways and you may not realize it. For example, violence can make you think that everyone is going to hurt you and could make you trust no-one. I can tell you how violence can affect your life and what you can do to reduce youth violence.

First, violence can impact your life by making you think that everyone around you can be violent. Violence can also make you scared of other people. Violence can even affect you physically, mentally, and emotionally, like for example, I would always be exposed to violence then after, I would feel upset or depressed because I would always see violence. Violence could make you become violent yourself and violence can also cause you stress and pain.

Second, some causes of youth violence are by not getting much education. The reason why not being educated causes violence is because they may not know that violence is a bad thing. They get bullied by others. Thinking that violence is okay because they grew up with violence and if they are exposed to violence. If they believe that violence is a cool thing. If they play games that are violent.

Third, what you can do to reduce youth violence is by being kind to them. You can also teach them what is right and what is wrong. You listen to what they have to say. If they are having trouble with something, you help them. You can get to know them so you understand them better. You let them do what they want as long as you are okay

with it. If you are with them, and they don't want to get mad around you.

Fourth, what you can do if youth violence is happening near you is by trying to calm them down and explain what is wrong. You try not to get angry at them and stay calm so you don't anger them even more. If they are being bullied, you can figure out why they are being bullied. If they got in trouble because of youth violence, you can try and ask them if what they did was okay. If you ask them what they need so they can calm down.

Lastly, my personal experience with violence is that, I don't normally talk to people, I don't talk to them or annoy them because they could be violent themselves and they could come up to me and start an argument. I am also afraid of violence myself which is why I don't talk often. I like to be at home because there isn't violence which is why I like to be at home.

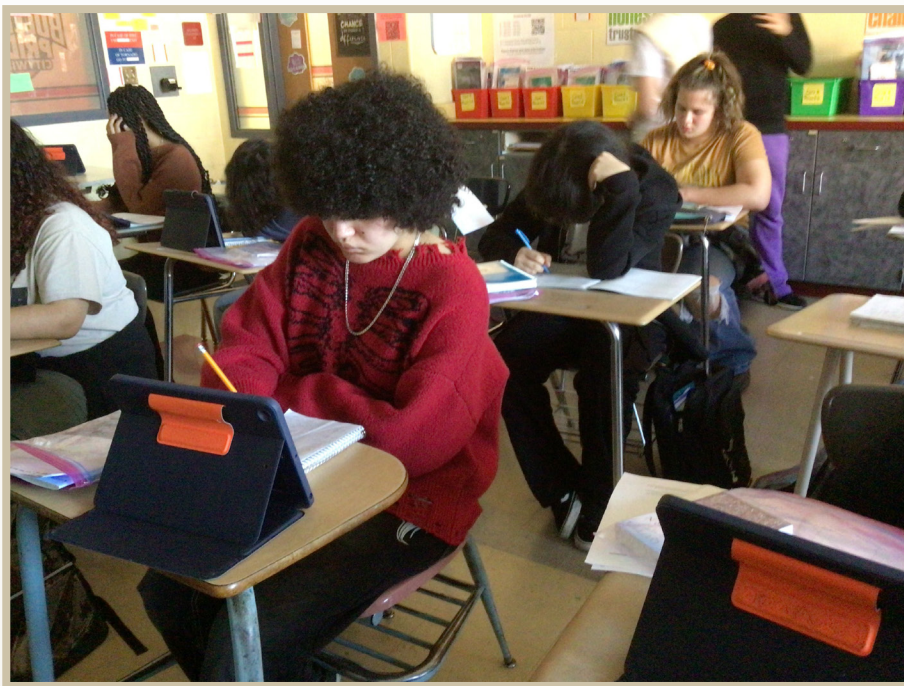
Overall, violence impacts your life in a way you may never expect. Violence and youth violence are mostly the same because of what they both mean. Violence can mean many different things, but the main goal with violence is to hurt someone. There are ways that we can do to help reduce violence like telling people that violence is never the answer to problems and that we should get to know each other better and talk about what you did was wrong because talking about something makes you feel better. When violence occurs near you, try to stop it because you may never know what may happen if it continues.



**Do the Write Thing participants from Crenshaw Middle School, from left: Alexa Johnson, Jamier Dunbar, Jazanee Jones, Isiaha Louis, Kenny Hoobler and Candice Lee.**



**Do the Write Thing participants from Bulldog Virtual Academy, from left: Kendra Tichenor and Davontae Wilson.**





**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

# Do the Write Thing 2024

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