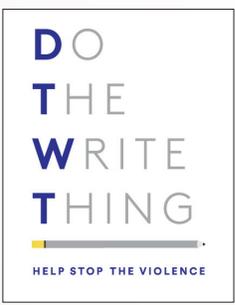




Do the Write Thing
Youngstown

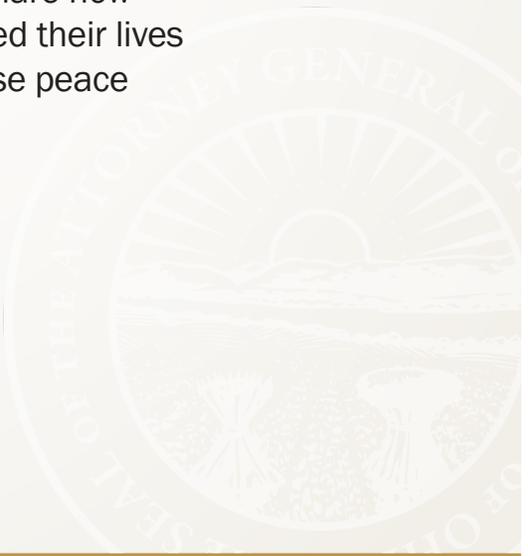


2023

Youngstown 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 Youngstown City School District for the *Do the Write Thing* program. This is the district's first year to participate in the program, and Youngstown students hit it out of the park!

I am amazed by the passion, thoughtfulness and self-awareness these middle-school students brought to their writings. Their words are powerful, and their commitment to making this world a better place is inspiring.

Talking about violence isn't easy. But shining light on the uncomfortable reality in many of our homes, schools and communities is critical to turning the tide and creating a brighter tomorrow. These students are our future, and we need to listen to their voices. In Youngstown, we hear you loud and clear!

I encourage everyone to take time to read the essays in this book. You may be surprised by what you learn, but I know the students' work 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

I am proud to announce that the Youngstown City School District had 120 middle school scholars who participated in the National Campaign to Stop Violence *Do the Write Thing* contest.

Our scholars were challenged and given the space to share what their community experience is like on a daily basis. This provided them the voice to share, in a written manner, how violence has affected their lives. This contest also gave them the ability to identify some potential causes and a space to share constructive ideas to solve the issue of youth violence.

Our community has endured many devastating events from violence on city streets that have given our scholars and their families a front-row seat to trauma and its aftermath. This contest has allowed free expression of personal experiences tied to the repercussions of violence. Our scholars brought raw emotion and transparency to their writings. Their expressions have raised the level of understanding of the trauma in the community.

We would like to thank all scholars who participated in this writing contest. I truly hope our community will listen to our scholars' voices with open hearts and create a plan for systematic change.

We want to thank Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost for recognizing this existence and giving our scholars the space to put their feelings on display and begin the healing process.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin M. Jennings". The signature is stylized and fluid.

JUSTIN M. JENNINGS, ED. SP.

Superintendent
Youngstown City School District

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This book contains a compilation of writings by middle-school students who were selected as the top 10 finalists of the 2023 *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 home, 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 Youngstown

During the 2022-23 school year, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost partnered with the Youngstown City School District for the *Do the Write Thing* program.

The program was well received, with 120 seventh- and eighth-grade students submitting essays.

Youngstown community and business leaders volunteered their time to read each essay and choose the 10 submissions most responsive to the key questions. From the top 10, two students were selected to become Ohio ambassadors to the national *Do the Write Thing* conference in Washington, D.C.

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 Youngstown. A special thank you to United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley for its sponsorship of the *Do the Write Thing* celebration and to 717 Credit Union for its contribution towards the scholar recognition gifts.



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

The national sponsor for the Do the Write Thing program is the Kuwait America Foundation.



ESSAY 1

CALERIS CRUZ ROSARIO

Rayen Early College Middle School

The problem with youth violence is that nowadays we are always on social media and most of the things we see on social media we want to do for fun. Youth violence has led others to think that things would be better if there would not be that much social media. This is because the content that is in the social media affects everyone's life either in a good way or a bad way. I am starting to agree with them because the problem is that we have so much access to social media and the new technology and that sometimes could be a problem. I also know that the problem with youth violence is that they are being affected by other things and reflect their feelings by violence.

Violence has affected my life in many ways, not directly but it has affected me. I have seen people around me that are under 18 years old harm people with violence daily and they don't even realize what they are doing to others based on their actions. I also have experienced how violence first starts like a game then later on it becomes a real deal, for example school fights or any other fights first start off as a game then later it becomes a real thing. I have also experienced verbal violence with the people around me. Verbal violence is when you say things hurtful and don't think or realize what you really said.

Some youth violence is produced on what we see on the tv, on our phone and social media. Social media is a major cause of youth violence since we spend most of our time in social media, I even spend most of my time in social media too but I know my level. By this I mean that I know

how far to get on based on what I see on social media. Another cause of youth violence is how they are treated by others. Most of the time I see how others start to use violence because they are not treated nicely or fairly by others. This could also affect someone's behavior and they will become violent and harmful, even though they don't really want to hurt anymore.

I can show others that violence is not the right thing. I know that for others it is easy to use violence, but there is also another way to solve youth violence without more violence. Like I said before I would prefer to talk things out and not start any verbal abuse or violence. We all have to gather together and show the world that violence is not how things can be solved in life. I can also be the bigger person and just let them know that what they are doing is not the right thing to do. By "being the bigger person" I mean that I will show them how things are really supposed to be done without violence.

In conclusion, youth violence is the biggest thing happening right now today but there are always reasons why youth violence exists and half of them are because of personal problems. In one way or another it has affected everyone, and that shows youth violence can affect everyone, not just us the young people. We all have to try to show the rest of the young people that nothing in the world gets solved with violence. Yes, social media could be one of the major causes of why there is so much youth violence around the world.



ESSAY 2

HAYLEE DAVIDUK

Rayen Early College Middle School

The problem of youth violence

Hello, my name is Haylee Daviduk, I am a 14 year old 8th grader who lives in Youngstown, Ohio and goes to Rayen Early College Middle School. I have six brothers and 3 sisters but I only live with my dad, step mom, and little brother. I will be talking about the problem of youth violence since it is so common here in America.

Now, how has Violence affected my life? Well Violence has affected my life in many ways, now I have never experienced much or as bad of violence but I did lose a family member because of violence that was caused. Violence has affected my life by taking my uncles life at such an early age, although I was very young I never got to meet him or remembered meeting him but I wished I was able too, all I hear is how good of a person he was and only saw old videos, and pictures of him. He was walking outside from a gas station and was on the sidewalk waiting for the city bus to arrive, then all of a sudden a male started walking up to him and tried robbing him, when my uncle refused, the male then pulled out a gun and shot him. It's been about five or six years without him I believe and I wouldn't want anyone to go through losing someone that's a part of their family. Sometimes I'm afraid that the same thing could happen to me when I walk to the corner store, walk around with friends and family, or even just walking home from the bus stop, yes it makes me upset thinking about if it might happen so I'd just stay home or try to get where I need to be in a certain amount of time.

What are the causes of youth violence?

Causes of youth violence could be the background history of growing up in a bad household, bad area, or even just being around negative, and disliking people. Maybe you even hang out with your "friends" but in reality they are bad influencers, which make you

become a bad influence also. Parents, or gaurdians who abuse their kids mentally and physically do drive their kids to the point of their kids wanting to take further actions to themselves like suicide, or killing their own biological family, and parents. Having bad behavior or anger management could conclude to these issues such as harming yourself, or even others around you. Some places here in Ohio, or even around the world causing youth violence are a lot mainly about the abuse towards drug use, and drinking. Taking substances do make you act out to the point where you'll hurt others and space out then not even realize what you have done when you sober up or are able to process where you're at. Bullying is a really common thing nowadays which includes their own family bullying them, their friends, at school especially and it causes mental and physical harm.

What can you do about youth violence?

Although I can not really do much about youth violence but in and around the neighborhoods I can get neighbors, and others around me to help, or anyone who steps up to help if I talk to them maybe they could be look outs so no violence around the neighborhood happens, putting up cameras or even making a little station people can use just in case something happens. We could make policies so we can create a safe environment for you, and others around you. Some stuff that we can conclude about youth violence are programs, little checkup papers for the school which means the counselors could go through mental health, and health services where the kids have a paper they fill out which would be mandatory. Many places have "cameras" but just not enough, so adding more cameras where places have little to none cameras and most violence happens in that place, or setting can be really useful. As far as the programs go we can have volunteers to watch out, and even act out just in case.



ESSAY 3

MELIYAH EDWARDS

Rayen Early College Middle School

I wish i can find an answer
To make it all better
And take the pain away
I hope to see that day
When violence ends
And we all can be friends again
Everyone knows it's wrong
Yet it still goes on
Can't you open your eyes
Can't you see all the cries
Don't hide from the truth
Violence is plaguing youth
Nothing is the same anymore
Life has turned into a full-scale war
Are you blinded by lies
By the darkness in the skies
They say nothing can be solved
It's hard to fix a problem with nobody involved
Your a part of society
You can be the key

To ensure none of this pain will last
He doesn't deserve to be scarred forever
She shouldn't cry everytime she is forced to remember
No on should bleed for long
Every boy and girl deserves to belong
It happens on the streets
You can find it in ignorant tweets
Hurting doesn't have to be physical
There's mental and emotional
We must not be enemies
We have to act like families
Let's talk things out
Let's erase our doubts
Despite previous events in history
Regardless of what happened in this country
I continued to hold on to the light
Because i believe this generation can make wrongs right
Shouldn't happiness be our priority
Tell me why nothing i do is enough
Explain to the world why youth have it so tough



ESSAY 4

JENNA KENT

Rayen Early College Middle School

Violence is a thing many people see daily, depending where you live or how you grew up, you could see it everywhere. No matter where or when you saw it, it could still have a big or small effect on you. Everyone handles it differently, for example some people act out when exposed to violence, others shut down and become mentally disattached, some aren't as phased by violence and they go on just like they were before. While violence is a bad thing, in today's society, people have normalized it as well as expected it.

How does violence affect your daily life?

No matter where you go there is a chance you will see violence. Where I grew up violence is pretty common. Almost everywhere you go there is arguments and fist fights, those are the most common to see around where I live. The question is "How" violence affects me but if i'm being honest I'm one of the people it doesn't affect much. While violence does affect me to be in, it doesn't affect me to see around. There are many ways violence can affect someone's life. Especially for people growing up in violent households. Luckily my mom did what she could to keep me away from violence growing up and for that I am very grateful, but she couldn't protect me forever especially going to public school. The school I'm at now is a great school with a lot of great possibilities and opportunities, but last year I was at a school for rejects. I don't mean to put that harshly but I'm being honest. The school was full of kids from all over the city and no one truly wanted to be there. We had at least three fist fights a day. People grew so used to it, the only thing it would affect is the path people took to class. It got so bad we needed to be searched every morning walking into the building because kids brought inappropriate items to school for the sole purpose of either to show it off or they were scared of losing a fight. All this definitely affected how I see the world and my town.

What are some of the causes of youth violence in your community?

Youth violence can start from something as simple as a misplaced item. People nowadays will and do blame others for everything. When something is displaced peoples first

thought is someone stole it, which leads to an argument over who stole it. Arguments can occur from any minor situation. The most common situation I've seen is over people's use of words or tone. People, mainly kids, have lots of attitude when speaking and honestly sometimes we don't hear it and we believe we're talking normally. Others like using curse words to get their point across. Usually using them against someone else then that causes hurt feelings from being called certain words which leads to more arguments. Another very common situation is disrespect. Feeling disrespected causes a lot of arguments. When one doesn't feel respected they could get very angry with the situation which could lead to more arguments. Arguments could very easily lead to fist fights.

What can you as an individual do to reduce youth violence in your community?

There's a few things I could do, I could help solve the problem with someone else or with myself. Helping solve problems with someone else is pretty easy, all you have to do is be a person they feel okay talking to. Gaining people's trust is a valuable thing and it's honestly not hard to keep. Doing so could cause less problems because they have someone to vent to. Personal problems are a little more difficult because I would have to look in and see if I was wrong in a situation. For a lot of people that's hard to do but if I were to be able to do that easily, I would be able to end arguments before making them big. Those are in the cases the argument already started. In case it hasn't started, I could stay in my lane and mind my business, don't put my opinion in and there's nothing for them to react to.

Violence can occur anywhere at any time and happen to anyone. The key is to not let it affect you because if you control yourself and let yourself be, you should have no problems with others. There's always gonna be people who don't like you but you can't control how they feel, only yourself. So if you don't let yourself be bothered, they have nothing to react off of. If you mind your own business, you also have nothing to react off of. Therefore, stopping the violence before it can even happen.



ESSAY 5 | AMBASSADOR

MADISON KEYS

Rayen Early College Middle School

Youth Violence is something that goes on here in America all the time. Young people getting hurt or even killed for the most stupid reasons, being threatened, bullied, Gang violence and many more things happen because of this. Youth violence affects so many people whether it's family or friends or even someone you just met! The problem is so many younger people are getting killed or are in hospital beds fighting for their life over this! And I'm here to change that. My name is Elena and this is my story.

It was a cold winter morning when my older sister and I were walking to school when she suddenly stopped. She had heard on the news about younger people being involved in violent acts. I stopped as well and turned back to face her. When I asked what was wrong she just looked at me and said "You know sis, sometimes I wonder what's wrong with people and why us younger people have to suffer for them" She looked down at the ground after she had said that. "What do you mean?" I asked. She then looked at me and smiled a little "Nevermind! Let's get to school before we're late" She said and put her arm around me as we were walking. We got to school about ten minutes later. My sister had already gone to class. She starts earlier than me because she's in 11th grade and I'm only in 9th. When I walked into the class I saw on the smart board that we were learning about Youth Violence, I shrugged and went to sit next to my friends. We were talking and laughing when the teacher walked in, and it was at this moment that I knew something was wrong. I just had that gut feeling that something was wrong. The teacher pointed at me and motioned for me to come outside of the classroom. So obviously I did, and this is when my life started to change. Everything went downhill in the blink of an eye. He told me "Elena, I don't know how to say this but..." He paused and the look in his eyes said it all. "Just tell me, Sir! What's wrong!?" I said worriedly. He sighed and then said "Your brother Elijah he was. He was hurt. in a drive-by this morning, and no one knows who did it or if he will make it but he's in the ICU right now at the local hospital. if you'd like to call home you can. I know this is a difficult thing to have to deal with so do what you need to do." Tears were running down my face, my big brother, the brother who promised he'd always be here is now fighting for his life! Why would my brother be hurt like this? So many questions were running through my head. So I called my dad and he came

to pick me and my sister up from school. We went straight to the hospital where we met with my mom who had been here the whole time. I looked at my brother from outside of the room while the doctors were helping him. How could it be that I and he were just hanging out last night having the time of our lives and then this? Me, my mom, dad, and sister all stayed with him until like 10 PM. Then we left and went home to get dinner. After I ate, I ran upstairs and was laying in bed thinking about what happened today. After a while, I fell asleep. My dad called me off school for the week so that I could be with my brother. I stayed with him every day, then one night we got the call. It was the police saying that one of the local gangs did this and that my brother had passed. "Elena! Get downstairs, it's about Elijah!" I heard my dad yell for me upstairs. So I ran down. When dad told me the news I felt my heart drop. "Why!? Why did this happen!? What did he do wrong!?" I said in between tears. My mom sighed and said, "Sweetheart it's not about what he did. maybe there was trouble at school there are many ways that these violent acts happen, and sometimes the kindest people have to pay the price." It was at this moment that I knew I would put an end to this! My brother will get what he deserves, and so will many other families who deal with this. I made it my life mission to stop this. And I kind of did, I now work with many families who have dealt or are dealing with this. And not one family will grieve alone, not one case will be left unsolved. These acts will never really be gone from our world but there will always be someone to try and stop it. And that someone is me, and my team. No one will ever suffer like this again. not the way I did. As a teenager full of grief, who had to handle it alone because her friends didn't understand. or because her sister moved off to college and her parents became distant. Everyone will get the justice they deserve. And I mean Everyone. even if it takes a lifetime. it will happen! And it did take a long time but I did make a difference. For some people at least. And that's what mattered. My brother will never be forgotten and neither will anyone else who was involved in these violent acts! Youth violence has had an impact on my life, my brother is dead because of it, as are many other individuals. And now with my help, no one will go through this alone, and I mean no one because no one deserves that. We can't give up on trying to make a change.



ESSAY 6

KAILEY KRAMER

Wilson Alternative School and Virtual Academy

Causes of youth violence these days are caused by social media, communities, mental illness, background, etc. Many young people are influenced by the community and environment where they have grown up and live. One cause of youth violence, is having lack of attention and respect. Some other causes of Youth violence can be caused by self defense, mental problems, relationships and many more. Youth violence is also affected by where you may have grown up or where you live. Youth violence can take different forms like fights, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang related violence.

A young person can be experience violence as a victim, offender or witness. Youth violence can have serious lasting effects on people's physical, mental, and social health. One way you can reduce violence is by setting up neighborhood watches, talking with police, and looking out for others. Telling people if you're a witness or victim to violence. Taking it seriously and not as a joke can make a change. It is important to strengthen your support networks to help others respond appropriately to cases of violence. Violence is another issue that is all over the media. We watch violence for fun and then are told it's bad. We also watch people humiliate others on tv etc. This could be a deadly combination when you get people that love to have a love for weapons and violence.

“Violence in schools has become the most problematic issue education faces today. Students have become violent and others are stubborn and do not listen when spoken to. In many cases, educators do not even get to the work that was planned for that class due the disruption in class. This can be stressful for educators. Increase of violence through the media.”(Ways to Reduce Violence in Schools. (2022, March 17) The rise of incidents involving social networking sites and introduction of smartphones has been significant for an increase in violence in the society. The increasing number of cyber crimes has to do with social media websites which are causing violence. A way to stop violence in our life is to bring awareness. It is very important for people to be aware of these issues.

Violence has affected my life in many ways. Many items can cause violence, and many people try to prevent it. Violence has affected me from bullying. My friends used to bully me and I used to get called names even by my own family. Bullying is something major and very important. Bullying can cause you to get depressed or start overthinking your life decisions. Violence is a very important thing and people should watch out for others or even help them when they see someone getting bullied or threatened. Adults and kids should stop bullying and watch what they do and say to others it can really make a permanent mark on them.



ESSAY 7

CHRISTIAN MOORE

Chaney Middle School

What is violence? Violence is behavior that involves using physical force that is intended to damage or even kill something or someone. Violence could be bullying too.

The time I recently experienced violence was in November 2022. I was in my room at my mother's house when I heard two loud bangs followed by screams. Not once out of my whole life I have ever heard bangs that loud. I looked out my window worried about what that noise was. At the time I was very certain that it was gunshots. Only moments later I saw police cars and an ambulance come down the road. The police had weapons and were aiming at a building saying "come out with your hands up". Apparently the person who let off the shots ran back to his house and the police spotted him. Multiple hours later the guy comes outside and surrenders his weapons to the police. From that moment on I will question why people choose to be violent with other people when we can all just live in peace. Now a year later I have come to a conclusion. Imagine that you get frustrated at someone because you got into an argument. That frustration leads to anger and then aggression. That aggression is what causes the person to commit violent acts.

What are the causes for youth violence?

1. Hanging around the wrong people: My dad once taught me that if you hang around bad people who make bad decisions for long enough you will eventually become one of them. That goes for everyone and everything. If the person were to be around people who would motivate and encourage them to make good choices the chances of the person committing a violent crime will lower drastically.

2. Living in a bad community or neighborhood: 3/4 weekends in the month I am not in Youngstown but at my mothers apartment. I don't live in the best community. The people here are not very friendly and the majority of people don't make good choices. As mentioned in number one if you're around bad people for long enough you will become one of them. That is why it is important that you live in a community or neighborhood that has low crime rates.

3. Poor parenting: Parenting plays a huge role in a child's life because they are the ones that teach you outside of school. Let's say that the parent(s) didn't make the best decisions in their youth but they thought that it was the correct thing to do. The parent(s) will teach the child about what they know is the "right" thing to do even though it is not right. That leaves the child to learn the hard way about what is right and wrong.

4. Father absent households: In father absent households the child is more prone to doing drugs, violence, physical aggression, etc.. The children are also six times more likely to live in poverty and commit crimes. Additionally sometimes what comes with no father is no proper teaching or discipline. 1 in 4 households in the US have no father in the house.

5. Traumatic Events: The final cause for violence is traumatic events. Let's say that you say a sentence that sparks trauma for someone. Someone's trauma could be abuse from their parents, car accidents, a very specific noise, etc. Their response may be physical or emotional although it depends on how bad the trauma is. If the trauma is really bad the person might fight you. Trauma sticks with people for their entire life so the person might take it really seriously and act out violently.

How can we stop youth violence?

1. A way we could stop youth violence is proper discipline. Discipline is not abusing your child. It could just be taking their phone away for a week or not allowing them to play with friends for a week but nothing too harmful. If you don't discipline your children they will think that they can do whatever they want and they will take advantage of that.

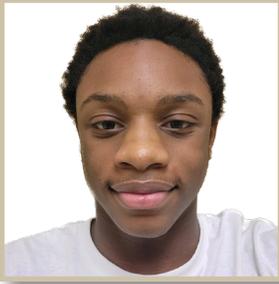
2. Setting a good example for your children or kids in general is mandatory. Since kids absorb what is around them you need to make sure that they are absorbing what is right and not wrong. Try being nice around a kid and not saying bad or harmful things around them. Additionally, don't do harmful things around them because they will also pick up on the act later on in life or even at a younger age.



3. Being involved in that person's life if you are a parent or even a friend. By being involved you can motivate, uplift, encourage, cheer on. You could motivate them to make better choices in their youth. Now what if the person we motivated to make good choices motivates another person and another person. Now those people are motivating other people and so on. Everyone would then be motivated to do the right thing and not be in those violent gangs. Remember how I said if you are around a group of

bad people you would become one. Flip that around and now you are around great people who make good choices. The people who make bad choices can now become a person who makes good decisions since it is what they are always around.

In closing, to prevent violence as much as one should always remember to uplift, encourage, and motivate others, make good choices, and to set a good example for others.



ESSAY 8 | AMBASSADOR

KANE PICKARD

Rayen Early College Middle School

How has youth violence affected your daily life? Youth violence has affected my life in many different ways. It's basically a significant public health problem that affects thousands of young children and teens every single day, and in spite, their families, schools, and communities. Lots of times it's my friends and family dealing with more of the problem but I do take part in some of these problems. My friends have gangs that they take part in doing dangerous things like smoking, drinking, having weapons illegally etc. In my family my cousins are doing bad things and having guns illegally putting their own freedom at risk. Violence can disrupt teens' development and harm their current and future health.

The main cause of youth violence is the influence of rappers and video games that are giving the kids the idea to do drugs and do illegal things to gain attention to the people they call friends and trying to make themselves become popular. Teens mostly come to the conclusion that they want to do dangerous things to get attention like missing school continuously, have low grades, eat lots amounts of food uncontrollability, become sad and hopeless because the way they treat themselves and what trouble they get themselves into and being under the influence of drugs and drinking, and doing very inappropriate and sexual activities, and having suicidal thoughts or behavior.

Some things I could do to change this world is give inspiration to others, make others think about their

actions and start a non-youth violence group spreading love and consideration to other teens and kids. I could start self love camps to resolve some of the problems and make them feel better about themselves and give more confidence to all kids that are willing to give themselves a chance to change the way they act on things. Some kids need a studie friend to help with some other problems like grades and missing class. And most children would need to have a counselor to help with addictions to drugs as nicotine, mariwanah and crystal meth are life threatening substances; alcohol like beer, wine, whiskey and other harmful drinks.

The world needs to take the time to help themselves and make better choices to save themselves and others because the world would become a better place for everyone as for themselves would feel better about how they live their lives and think before they act on the influence that the new generation has on the world.

Teens have the mindset to do what they see and not what they want and as adults we need to keep our childrens doing what they need to keep their grades right and gain success on earth and accomplish unthinkable things to do what this world has never thought and always learn how to use money and know when to think hard about things and when to just relax and take their decision into consideration and think about all the possible outcomes to there actions.



ESSAY 9

ALONDRA RIVERA RODRIGUEZ

East Middle School

One day a kind person asked me 3 questions ...

1. How has violence affected your life?
2. What are the causes of youth violence?
3. What can we do to reduce youth violence?

And with respect and kindness I said “Violence never defeats its own ends.”

I shared some things about how violence affected me, what causes violence, and how we can reduce violence.

Violence has affected my family and me a lot, my family is so overprotective and now I can't go out so much. I hate things like this. I love to have freedom. I love to go out and see the fun and feel the air. But in the end I know they are trying to protect me from the bad things. In my head there's so many things that I think about, I get scared and cry because I see the things that are happening around the world. Just knowing that violence is real gets me scared... There's so many things that we people can do, but now we need to be careful because no one knows the time and place we will die, things like this have happened for a really long time. In my family some people have died as police officers, people from the army and some people have died because of violence. It hurts because they are family. I never got to meet some of them, but just knowing that they couldn't live to the max or they lived to save all of us.... hurts a lot. In this world there are two types of people: the ones that do bad and the ones that do good. I wish that they can feel the pain of how it is to lose family members and it doesn't have to be family members it can be people that you were close with. In my life I have a story that hurts a lot, my uncle, who is a police officer, almost die he lives in Puerto Rico, it was a normal day he was doing his work when a person pass the speed limits, my uncle stop him, the car smell really bad and the person couldn't really talk, my uncle told him to step out of the car and so he did, when he got out of the car the person grab the gun that he had on his pocket and shot my uncle on the left side arm, he almost die. Thankfully he didn't get shot on the heart. I always thank God for all the good and bad things no matter what. Because if it wasn't for God my uncle would have passed away. Still these days I thank God because even though I don't go out so much I

can have fun inside even though I get bored sometimes.

There's so many things that cause youth violence, but it can happen in different places, for Example in the house, in the school, in the park, etc. The cause of youth violence is people who like to bully kids saying that they're weak and that they will never be something good in life. Peer pressure is no good either, getting told what to do or you are forced to do things that u dont like. It's not ok, because it can end really badly. Bullying and peer pressure are happening often in school. We people that understand what this means need to stop it because around the world kids die because of things like this. This world has turned so negative and bad, some people even get abused, then they kill themselves. Families cry day and night because of their loved ones. Some people get depressed so badly and then kill themselves because they can't accept reality; they can't believe that this world is so bad and that there's people that dont care. US people need to change a lot. THIS IS NOT FUNNY. People are dying, little kids are dying, people get beat up to death. We need to have more control of what's around us. Just imagine if the person you love the most gets killed. How would you feel Sad and angry right? Well that's how family feels, we really need to change. People get killed these days by small things. Some people don't care about your religion if ur Black, Indian, Hispanic, White, etc. If they don't like your religion they will tell you all kinds of things, people can kill you if they want too, Life is no game. We are family, we are humans, everybody has feelings too, we are all equal, we need to stop violence people go missing or some people die and that's not ok. The only thing we do is look at the news, violence will keep going if we don't try to make the world better, nothing is impossible. Domestic Violence and Child Abuse, Insufficient Parental Supervision, Peer Pressure, Drug and Alcohol Use, Traumatic Events all of this causes violence. Nothing good ever comes of violence.

Some of the things we can do to reduce violence is Modify the physical and social environment, Reduce exposure to community-level risks, Street outreach and community norm change. Teach children good safety habits while walking to and from school and playing in the neighborhood. Help people get out of the black hole and tell them that it is ok to have a bad day. Don't say bad things about them because



believe it or not they might act like they don't care but words cut deeper than what you think. If u see a person walking pass u say Good Morning, Good Afternoon, or Have a good day because things like this matter every little nice things that u do matter, you can even change a person's life by doing something nice. Be there for your friends and loved ones, make them laugh, make them see that they are not alone and that they have a real friend by their side and that if they need to talk to someone

you're there for him/her. but we US people have to be better people everyday, positive, kind, safe, Respectful, and Responsible and these words I learn from the Golden Bear way. They show me to do the opposite of what bad people do. I'm not saying this because I'm in that school, I'm saying this because they show me that if we do good things, good things will happen, that they care a lot for us and more.



ESSAY 10

MAKAILA ROLAND

Rayen Early College Middle School

I am Human

I am a teenager and human being, however I don't feel like my voice is heard because of my age. On June 13, 2022, Ohio passed a bill making it optional for a qualifying adult to obtain a concealed handgun license. This allows the individual to carry a gun anywhere that a person with a license can carry, and they possess the same rights and responsibilities. This law allows people to easily get a gun without taking classes on gun safety or going through a background check, before purchasing a gun. This law is frightening, because more households will have access to guns without classes on gun safety.

I hear people speaking out on youth violence only after someone dies, however schools are not taking the proper precautions to ensure safety. Society is not looking at resolutions from the youth. I would like to see gun control classes as a part of our curriculum. Instead of learning about the life of Dr. King Jr., I would like to learn his teachings on conflict resolution, the 6 Steps and Principles of Nonviolent Social Change. This would empower youth to learn how to handle conflict. Teachers should be taught how to handle bullying effectively. Teachers and students should be taught what to do in the event of a mass shooting, because I would not know what to do if it happened in my school. Metal detectors should be mandatory prior to accessing any part of a school. Youth should be at the forefront, when laws are being made so that we are a part of the resolution, and our voice is heard. We should be treated as humans and our voices should be heard, because many of the laws are affecting us directly.

I Am Human

I am a teenager,
I love the color blue,
I should not be in fear that I'll die if me and my classmate argue.
I am an adolescent,
My favorite color is red,
But I should not see it leaking from my teacher's head.
I am disciplined,
I'm in school to learn,
I shouldn't fear what will happen when violence is what

young people yearn.

I am the future,

Yet I do not feel heard

I am screaming for help, but help comes only after violence has occurred.

I am a daughter,

Who won't get to go home to my mom,

With a gun to my head or threats of a bomb.

I am a son

Who will never again see my dad,

Aware that I was killed 'cause someone's mood was bad.

I am a student,

The education system lets me yelp,

When I tell them I'm bullied, so many refuse to help.

I am important,

My life is not small,

I shouldn't see the blood of my friends smeared across the wall.

I am an activist,

We plea, we protest, we cry,

Yet nothing changes, I don't understand why.

I am empowered,

Hear my shout,

Save us from death and evacuate us out.

We are influence,

We are choice,

They'll never get to silence,

Our outstanding voice.

Let us go to school,

Shout and scream for peace,

We will never let go,

We will never cease.

A bicker is one thing,

A life is another,

No more burials,

No more tears of a father and mother.

Do what you can,

Do what you must,

Help make schools safe,

Speak out and join us.



DAVE YOST

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