



Do the Write Thing

Canton

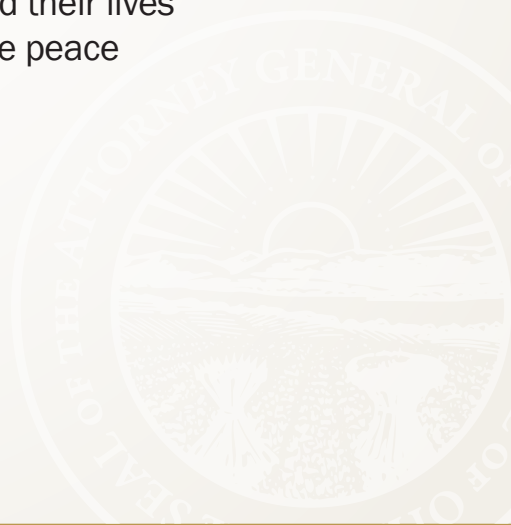


2025

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 for the *Do the Write Thing* program for the fourth year in a row.

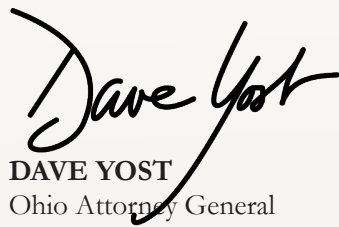
Through *Do the Write Thing*, Canton middle-school students have the opportunity to write about violence and how it has affected their lives. As always, the students embraced the chance to share their experiences and offer their ideas for a safer community.

I was so impressed with their honesty, insight and compassion. These essays most certainly were not easy to write, and often tough to read, but the impact of their words is invaluable to our search for understanding and a more peaceful society.

I commend Canton City Schools for recognizing the importance of this program and the benefits it brings to the students, teachers and greater community. Giving our young folks a voice and truly listening to what they have to say will leave an impact on their lives that will have untold benefits in the future.

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,


DAVE YOST
Ohio Attorney General



FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Canton City School District once again proudly participated in the annual *Do the Write Thing* Challenge. Over 1,000 students held group discussions with their teachers and fellow classmates about how youth violence affects them, followed by writing 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 can do to reduce it.

In Ohio, the national program is sponsored by Attorney General Dave Yost and his staff. The Canton City School District appreciates this opportunity for our students to discuss and share their experiences and ideas in their own voices. *Do the Write Thing* provides an outlet for those who face challenges and want to 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' voices are already strong and clear, deserving 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 winner. I look forward to our ambassador 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 18 finalists of the 2025 *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 2024-25 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 1,085 seventh- and eighth-grade students submitting essays.

Canton community and business leaders volunteered their time to read each essay and chose the 18 submissions most responsive to the key questions. From those, one student was selected to become Ohio's ambassador to the national *Do the Write Thing* conference in Washington, D.C.

The school district would like to thank the following community leaders for taking the time to carefully read and score each composition. Their support makes the *Do the Write Thing* program possible for our students, and their time spent investing in the future of our students is much appreciated.

William Sherer, Mayor of Canton

John Gabbard, Canton City Chief of Police

Andrea Perry, Director of Public Safety

Dr. Jennifer Webb, Chair of the Department of Education at Malone University

Dr. Michelle Bemiller, Associate Professor at Walsh University

Jeff Talbert, Superintendent of the Canton City School District



Do the Write Thing is the flagship program of the National Campaign to Stop Violence and has been in existence for 30 years. It operates programs in 29 cities in 15 states. Over the past 30 years, more than 1.5 million middle school students have submitted writings to the program.

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



ESSAY 1

RYAN BRINSON

Crenshaw Middle School

I'm here to answer all your questions about youth violence. I have experienced violence and youth violence in my old neighborhood. There used to be people shooting and fighting all the time and I was always worried about me and my family's safety. I believe that violence is not always the answer in some cases of things. For one kids and adults should not always resort to wrong doing, in every situation, they believe to solve things that they have to resort to violence, but that's not always the way.

How violence has effected my life, is by in my old neighborhood people tried to egg me on to be in a gang or do things I didn't want to do. So I was peer pressured to do things, I didn't want to do and didn't want to be apart of and if I said I didn't want to be apart of things of that nature they would say I was lame or weird because I didn't want to be a bad person. But now that I'm older I have matured and now I can stand up for myself and not be peer pressured at all.

An example of youth being killed or injured in my community is gang related things. Like people being

jumped, shot or even killed. The thing I really don't like in my community is that good people can turn bad really fast, depending on the friends they have and depending on what is going on in their home and lives. Another example is when people at school get into a heated argument about something that doesn't even evolve school or anything that matters at our age. Someone would say that's why you are dumb or stupid and someone else would retaliate with violence and threats.

What I can do as an individual to reduce youth violence is by being a good role model for people my age or younger. I can help them not have to always result to violence and be a more mature and more calm person and not have to be so violent. When someone sees ways to make you mad and want to see you go and do something dumb or crazy. I can always help someone be their best and not be a follower but a leader in their community, neighborhood or school. Now you know more about youth wrong doing and ways to prevent yourself from becoming a follower or be peer pressured to do bad things.



ESSAY 2

JULIANA CLARK

Crenshaw Middle School

Violence can have a major effect on some people's lives. Some people think violence is always the answer, while others don't. Violence can play a big role in people's life. Even if someone has never experienced violence directly before. Violence can be an effect through many different ways, for example it can be seen, heard, or even experienced. For me and many others, I have never experienced violence directly.

Youth violence can have a major effect on some people. It may differ based on the type of household you grew up in or what you were surrounded with. Many children that have experienced youth violence may think that violence is the answer to their anger. They may think that when they are angry that violence is the key to overcoming their anger. Or they might see that others are using violence so they feel the need to use it as well.

Another reason youth violence can effect people is that it may create fear, sadness, or even anger. Children who have never experienced violence directly may feel anxious, nervous or fear when they see violence around them.

They could also feel sorrow for others who have to experience violence at home or just in general.

One way we can reduce youth violence is we could set up classes or clubs talking about the effect of violence and the consequences it comes with. Another way could be that different coping mechanisms could be taught in schools on why violence isn't the answer and other ways to deal with your anger instead. One way you could take your anger out instead could be sports. Another mechanism could be to talk with a counselor or trusted adult about your anger. Lastly another way to prevent youth violence could be to one on one talk with kids who deal with violence or commit violence to others.

In conclusion, violence can be scary for others but it is never the answer. Violence at a young age should be prevented. Youth violence has many effects on people, even if it was never experienced directly. In the end violence plays a big part in people's lives and should not be ignored.



ESSAY 3

KAY'LANNA FISHER

Early College Middle School

The Fire in Their Hands

Fists, wild and keen,
Crashing through the space between.
Words turn sharp as shattered glass,
Cutting through the silence, fast.

Youth violence, a fire with no control,
Burning bridges, blackening souls.
Their hearts beat like a war drum's call,
But no one hears the cries at all.

In their eyes, the ghosts of fear,
A shattered mirror drawing near.
They wear their pain as a crown,
Each breath another in the down.

The fire in their hands will scorch,
But still they walk that burning porch.
With every fight, they lose a piece,
Hoping somehow it will bring peace.

But youth, it fades, it falls like rain,
Washing out the marks of pain.
If only they'd see the end of night,
And put the flame out before the fight.

And then, one breath. a whisper's grace,
A gentle wind begins to trace,
Across the embers, soft and slow,
A cooling breeze begins to blow.

The fire falters, cracks, and sighs,
The blaze, once fierce, now learns to die.
Ashes fall, like memories burnt,
A lesson learned too late, but earned.

With trembling hands, they drop the flame,
No longer chasing hollow fame.
The sparks that once could blind the eyes,
Now fade beneath forgiving skies.

The heat retreats, the air grows still,
And for the first time, time stands still.
A final tear a quiet vow
The fire out, but what of now?

A spark remains within their chest,
But no longer at war, they rest.
And in that peace, the quiet flame,
Is hope reborn — a different name.



ESSAY 4

LAYLAH FORD

STEAMM Academy

Youth violence is a big problem in our society today. Some of our big problems in today's society are suicide, domestic violence, gun violence and gang violence. These big problems also come with consequences for example, having a lot of negativity towards yourself and others. With what I went through and saw in my life I feel like there are a ton of reasons for youth violence.

Youth violence had a big impact on me. At 13 years old, I had to get help for my best friend, she was ready to commit suicide due to being bullied. Not only did it effect her mentally and physically, but me as well. Knowing my best friend was going through such a hard time and I wasn't able to help at the moment. This had a big impact on my best friend's family and other friends.

Some effects of bullying make people want to harm and hurt themselves. Such as trying to change their identity to fit in, wanting to hurt themselves to think that would make people happy based on someone else's opinion. Just words can hurt someone so bad and you wouldn't even know it. The problem my best friend dealt with was her looks, not

everyone thought she was the most beautiful girl so they took it upon themselves to bring her down which made her have bad low self esteem. She is one of the sweetest girls I know and it hurt me to know she had to deal with people that didn't even know her.

If you're ever in a situation similar to this, my advice is to tell a trusted adult and let your friend know she is beautiful in her own way no matter what anybody says or does.

Another idea is to stand up for her or even yourself and let the bully know what they're doing is wrong and this isn't the reputation they want to be known for. Lastly, you or your friend can just walk away and let them realize you are not worried about what they have to say and they will stop.

In conclusion, youth violence causes a lot of big problems. Treat people how you want to be treated because you never know what people are going through. If you see or hear something say something to a trusted adult to prevent self harm and suicide. There are many different examples of youth violence that you can help prevent to make today's world a better world for now and the future.



ESSAY 5

JACOB FRENCH

Crenshaw Middle School

Have you ever wondered how had violence affected your life, what are some of the causes of youth violence in my neighborhood, or what can you as an individual help to reduce youth violence in my neighborhood? This is a tough subject for some people. Violence should be talked about more through every community and neighborhood. Think about the three question I stated earlier. Youth violence has effected people worldwide and is not something to play around about. I'm going to tell you how I feel and my opinion on those three important questions I have mentioned earlier about violence.

One subject I'm going tell you about is how violence has effected my life. One way violence has effected my life is it got me in trouble when I got mad at my brother and turned to violence. I shouldn't have turned to violence because it got me in trouble and it may have effected my brother's opinion about me. Another way violence has effected my life is it makes me worry. It makes me worry when I have to go to school thinking about kids like me who has lost their own life in school shootings. The last way violence has effected my life, it causes me to be sad. It makes me sad when I think about gang violence, and how many people that have gotten stabbed, shot, beat up, killed and more. How has violence affected you?

Another subject I'm going to tell you about is the causes of youth violence in my community. One cause of youth violence in my community is drama. I always see fights going on because of drama or what one person says to the other, that affects my community a lot. Another cause of youth violence in my neighborhood is bullying. I see

a lot of people get bullied over something they cannot control this can lead to somebody hurting themselves, or even ending their own life. The last cause of violence in my community is, is gang violence. Gang violence can lead to drugs, death, and people getting hurt, this impacts my community in a very negative way. What are some of the reasons for youth violence affects your community?

The last subject I will tell you about is how I myself can stop youth violence. One way I can stop youth violence is spreading awareness. I can give awareness by telling people about how youth violence effects our community and more people could try to put an end to youth violence in my community and maybe some other communities. Another way I can stop youth violence in my community is spreading kindness and love throughout my community. This can work because instead of everybody not liking each other they can accept them and be able to live with each other in peace. The last way I can stop youth violence in my community is by telling people what they are doing is wrong. Maybe if I can tell them what they are doing is wrong, maybe they will stop doing bad things. How can you stop youth violence in your community?

In conclusion, violence by itself is a problem and has affected communities all over the world. If we all come together we can put an end to this problem. We all will not be able to stop youth violence, but maybe just maybe we can make communities one by one inspired to do the same. We all might not agree on the same things, but I can bet that everyone thinks that this is a problem and we need to fix it fast.



ESSAY 6

AMANI HARPER-BYRD

STEAMM Academy

Violence is almost everywhere I go. Some violence has changed the way I view certain things such as school and unknown neighborhoods. I don't feel safe or protected because of violence, especially ones that involve women and girls. I don't feel safe walking in unknown areas because I'm not sure of anyone or anything. What if someone's following me, what if someone is watching me? Those are the only thoughts I think because of violence around me. I miss the days when I could take a morning walk without wondering if someone is gonna take me. I miss when wearing skirts or shorts in the summer wasn't known as being "fast" or "wanting it". I miss when we as women and girls wouldn't get sexualized for every move we make. I miss when women and girls weren't set to such low standards. I miss when women and girls could live their lives without having to worry about men looking at them.

Violence has also changed my point of view of walking at night. Walking at night is supposed to be peaceful, relaxing and therapeutic. Now it's just a call for sexual assault. The majority of walking at night is peaceful but the other piece is not. Little girls from ages 5 to even ages like 80 have a chance of getting assaulted at night. There are too many cases to count with my fingers on how many women got assaulted when walking at night. Some even go all the way and kill them. Women shouldn't have to worry about being killed when walking or running at night. This violence has gotten out of hand. Women and girls can't even let off some steam without thinking "Hopefully no one hits on me" or "Hopefully I make it

home." We shouldn't have to worry about these things, we should be living our life how we want to.

Girls and women have to learn self-defense because middle-aged men don't know how to control themselves. Women have made self-defense keychains also because of violence. People don't know how much violence has affected the world, let alone women and girls. Women and girls get killed or assaulted every day over the tiniest things. We as girls in school have so many rules on dress code than boys do. We can't even wear a tank top without it being considered "sexual". What has happened to equality, the equality we fought for ages ago?

The cases of suicide because of bullying are ridiculous. No one should be bullied so bad to the point where they don't wanna live anymore! As for the schools, they need to do better with protecting the students that they do have. Someone's thoughts shouldn't be suicidal because of school. Schools always say that they make learning fun, but they obviously aren't. Schools only care about themselves and money. These bullies are crazy to make someone question if they wanna live or not. Some kids have depression by age 8, all the way to 20. Depression is a real thing whether people like it or not, and that should affect our lives.

As humans, we need to come together and spread kindness other than violence. We can make a difference if we just try. A small action can have a big impact, so let's make it happen. In conclusion, violence shouldn't affect our lives, so let's not make it.



ESSAY 7

ALEXA JOHNSON

Crenshaw Middle School

Violence; by definition, it means behavior with the intent to harm others, or yourself. Violence affects everyone, even the person who is responsible for causing it. Violence has affected my life by showing to me that some people really do have it worse than others. It's also shown me that there are real reasons why people become violent to themselves or others. However, it can be stopped. So many people work to prevent violence daily; lawyers, judges, teachers, cops, first responders, 911 operator, all work their hardest to prevent violence for everyone.

Youth violence, or violence among young people, including teens and adolescents can be caused by a number of things, but I think that one of the leading causes, is home/family situations. I was lucky to grow up with a mom who believes very strongly against violence and it's shaped me as a person. Some people aren't so lucky. Violence can happen anywhere, if someone grows up in a house where fighting is a constant thing then they might think that it's a normal way to solve problems. One in every four girls and one in every thirteen boys in the U.S. are exposed to abuse, this can drastically affect a child's view of the world. This only applies to cases reported. My mom always told me that you never know what someone else is going through, and that applies to bullying and violence. Sometimes it's the only way a person knows to express themselves.

Another cause of violence is mental health. It doesn't have to be their own mental health, it could be a parent or a sibling, even a friend. Every one in four adults experience depression, and one in ten children experience depression. Having or knowing someone with poor mental health can make you feel helpless and worthless.

It can make you angry and make you more likely to lash out and become violent. In 2022, the NSDUH found that 22% of teens use illicit drugs to cope with mental health issues. Drugs may seem like a good way to feel better, but you're 26% more likely to become violent within 24 hours of using drugs.

I can reduce violence by acting as a role model to young people in my community. If I don't lash out or tell at others, even if I am frustrated it teaches kids that violence is not the answer. I can also stand up for those I know who are struggling with being bullied, but also let the bully know that they're not alone in whatever they are going through. Another great way to help reduce violence is to become involved in school or community group. When you participate in activities that are beneficial such as volunteering at the animal shelter, working a soup kitchen, volunteering at a help line, or building shelters for homeless people it teaches others that kindness is what needs to be shared, not violence.

No matter what violence needs to stop all over. Putting an end to violence for good starts with you, if you are positive it shows and you can spread that to others who may really need it. We as people have to recognize that violence is not caused out of pure jealousy or hatred, but there are serious reasons a person can be that way. Rome wasn't built in a night, violence won't end in a night, but someday, it will get there. We have to take small steps to get there, though, so give a cart to someone at the store, help an elder cross the street, help your mom out around the house, compliment someone, and you can be a part of something amazing.



ESSAY 8

XZHAUN LYTLE

STEAMM Academy

When you were a kid were you ever exposed to any type of abuse by or to another kid? If so, how did it happen and why did somebody do that to you or them? Most people are exposed to youth violence as a kid, they have either been or seen it. Youth violence is a very horrible thing that happens in this world.

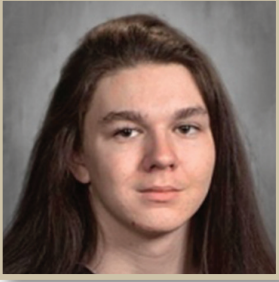
A lot of kids die from youth violence. According to the sandy hook promise, "Each day 12 children die from gun violence in America. Another 32 are shot and injured." According to the sandy hook promise, "Guns are the leading cause of death among American children and teens. 1 out of 10 gun deaths are age 19 or younger." This shows that there are a whole lot of kids dying in the US because of youth violence. Most of the people who die are young people, but kids even under the age of 5 are hurt in different ways. Some kids are kidnapped and or taken from their home and either killed or hurt in a big amount of ways. Too many kids die in the US for mostly no reason or aggravation, but even then I don't understand why people would want to hurt, let alone kill innocent kids. This shows a lot of kids die from youth violence.

Youth violence is a serious problem that affects young people in many ways. According to ohioheals.org, "According to 2017 population estimates, white children and youth comprise 74% of the population ages 0-24 in Ohio, with black children and youth comprising 17%; Hispanic 6%; Asian 3%; and American Indian less than 1%." According to ohioheals.org, "Between 2000 and 2017, white children and youth ages 0-24 within the state general population decreased 14%. In contrast Hispanic children and youth increased 90%; Asian 87%, and Black

7%. This shows that this is affecting the population big time. Way too many kids are dying and it is affecting the population of kids. Youth violence has a devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities, leading to physical injuries, emotional trauma, and even death. Moreover, it erodes the sense of safety and security within communities, creating an environment of fear and distrust. This shows that youth violence is a serious problem that affects young people in many ways.

Some of the things that happen in school like bullying are why some people die. According to the sandy hook promise, "About 1 out of 5 gay and lesbian youth have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property." According to the sandy hook promise, "Many young people suffer silently because they feel alone or invisible. Those who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence, or depression." This shows that a lot of people in this country get bullied. They get bullied because of how they look, how they act, or their sexuality. Bullying behaviors include: Teasing, name-calling and taunting. Spreading rumors about someone or intentionally embarrassing someone in a public setting. Hitting, kicking, tripping, punching or embarrassing someone in a public setting. Hitting, kicking, tripping, punching or spitting. This shows that one of the ways people die is because of what happens at school like bullying.

So, have you ever been hit as a kid or hurt in a variety of ways? If so, what happened to you and why? A whole lot of children get exposed to violence as a kid or get confronted by it. This shows that youth violence is a very horrible thing that happens in this world.



ESSAY 9

NOAH MELTON

Crenshaw Middle School

I began as a flower.
However, I blossomed differently.
No way did I have to see anything on my left side.
I kept sprouting growing fast and loud.
Until my petals were ripped forcefully.

I couldn't stop it
Week after week, I could do nothing but take it.
I didn't say anything because I didn't understand what was happening.
I finally left that place when my mom came home.

But, I was tarnished.
Didn't feel the same after what happened.
Never liked the flower I was after that.
The once tall flower withered to a thorny rose.

As I grew up further, I noticed more and more how much hate there is.
You can be hated for anything, your looks race, gender, anything.
Nothing is as equal as hate was.
And hatred breeds more hatred and that breeds violence.
A continuous cycle.

One that infected me.
I had hatred for myself, for every mistake I made.
I withered more to the point where I took the gardeners shears.
Causing permanent harm.

However, I still have hope that we can stop this.
That if we all loved instead, respect one another for they are then we can spread positivity.
Allow other people to bloom and not wither.
We can save so many lives.



ESSAY 10

IAIN PLOWMAN

Early College Middle School

Youth Violence

All this hate,
It puts up a gate.
Pausing my learning
For that which I have been yearning for.
Every day, we walk through the doors,
Halted by metal detectors, shrieking with every student who passes them.
Then there's the drills.
We turn off the lights, huddle on the floor, training for a gun,
It truly isn't any fun
We even practice it on the bus,
To try and put up a fence, protecting us.
Why need a fence, if we could stop the violence?
Why need violence if we could help?
Just a talk, even a compliment.
All this hate, it isn't grown, it's spread.
Like a mighty oak tree, which spreads its seeds to grow new trees,
Hate spreads, and infects others just like a disease.
But, like a weed, when you pull it from the root, it won't grow back.
All this hate,
It puts up a gate.
I think it's time
To tear down the gate.



ESSAY 11 | AMBASSADOR

KAYLA PORTER

Early College Middle School

“Violent behavior involves physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.” The distinct branch of violence that I will be talking about in this essay is youth violence, which describes acts of harm and aggression pertaining specifically to children and maturing young adults. Essentially the age demographic you would expect from students in elementary up until college. It is an increasingly rife matter which heavily weighs on the safety of schools and their occupants situated in the United States. I mean to address what I have seen of youth violence and its impact on our culture myself, the factors that can lead up to its creation and continuous spread, and possible solutions or pathways towards lessening it.

Desensitization is defined as, “a psychological process that reduces a person’s emotional response to a negative stimulus through repeated exposure.” Anyone can fall victim to accidental or even purposeful desensitization happening in their lives. More often than not, it is harder to recognize when it is affecting you personally rather than other people. It happens most commonly when morally wrong behavior or situations are normalized in society. It is an “acceptable” part of life because said thing has simply gone on for so long. The signs that would usually inform people when something bad is going on stay just as prevalent, but fade into the background with time. I bring this up because desensitization is closely tied to my own perception of youth violence. At times when planning my essay I found that the topic was hard to wrap my head around, or in other words, difficult to fully understand. I rarely hear about youth violence as a subject, and when I do it is because a large, tragic event has taken place such as a school shooting or a homicide on educational grounds. (Which, might I add, are things that are blown over unsettlingly quickly by the general public.) I thought that because I have experienced or witnessed very little outright violence myself, and the instances I have seen were rather harmless, I would have little material to share in the area of youth violence. This was an incorrect assessment. Really, as a middle schooler in the American school system my routine is chock full

of procedures and prohibitions put in place to try to limit the possibility of violence happening. Only this year, it was put into place at my building that we are no longer able to carry book bags during the school day for the fear that we might be concealing weapons or a harmful substance. For similar reasons metal detectors were installed at the front entrances. This creates inconveniences for us students that we have had to learn how to circumvent, all because of the constant threat that youth violence is to our livelihood.

“Ignorance is a state of being unaware or lacking knowledge or understanding.” Ignorance is strongly tied to deliberate inaction, the refusal to do anything at all to help prevent or stop a situation or problem. When something is not visible to you or affecting you in specific, it is easier to disregard its importance. This is a fact which stands true for plenty of issues, especially those that are born out of violence. Youth violence is not an unknown phenomenon, but as I wrote about earlier it has developed into an average part of the American expectation. In fact, it is a running gag on certain social media apps (Tik Tok being one example) for individuals from other countries as well as the USA to joke about our schools being highly susceptible to gun violence. The amount of measurable, reflective attention that is being given to the crisis of youth violence is immensely low. Instead of taking it upon ourselves to put meager practices in place that do not effectively cancel out youth violence, a different approach needs to be taken to target it at its roots. Now, that is not to say that isolating the causes of youth violence is an easy task. The nuance and variability that comes with being human makes it difficult, because we are an insanely complex species with different perspectives and experiences. Younger generations have a higher capacity for impressionability, and during their formative years there are many influences that could lead them to develop a tendency for violence. Just to list a few variables: mental health instability, stress from conformity, parental indulgence or negligence, abuse, trauma, access to weapons or drugs/alcohol, peer pressure, bullying of all kinds, and prejudice. When it comes to youth violence, for people my age a common response when



faced with tackling or fixing it is just to shut down. It seems such a monumental task, one out of our power and that we should not even have to worry about as minors. However we still have a part to play in sharing our perspectives and making schools feel like safe, welcoming environments where people can express themselves. This learned helplessness does us no favors in working to connect with our peers and educators, ensuring that the wellbeing of everyone is thought of and cared for. Although it can be uncomfortable to discuss or even really think of serious, hurtful topics it is incredibly important that adolescents and adults are equally educated on such things. Communication goes a long way, and a lack of information as well as the motivation to do something is a glaring disadvantage in practically all age groups against youth violence. These two things may not be direct sources that it originally comes from but they are major contributors to the continual presence of it.

“Awareness is the concern about and well-informed interest in a particular situation or development.” The first step, and a rather frequently used one when dealing with similar concepts, towards the absolute prevention of youth violence is spreading awareness. There are a lot of things within and a part of the American education system that fundamentally feed into a sense of oppression and strain for the people involved in and under its jurisdiction, not only students but also staff members like teachers. Mental health should be taken extremely seriously. It takes an active, understanding, and observant network of people to prevent terrible acts, in addition to the circumstances which lead up to them. Some devastating events can not be avoided or even anticipated, which ties into the overall unpredictability of life, and instead those who are affected by them should be treated respectfully and mindfully. The process of acknowledging and solving an issue should never become more problematic than the issue itself. Emotional intelligence as well as empathy should be a recognized and looked for trait in people working in

schools with children. Admittedly, it is hard to devise a plan for stopping the progression and growth of youth violence. The question we as a society and community of individuals need to ask ourselves is that if what we are doing currently is not enough, It has not made a desirable impact, then what more has to happen to make the opposite true? Our government should be as dependable as possible, it should care about its youngest citizens and truly uphold our interests, but mainly our protection. Assignments involving programs such as Do The Write Thing are movements being made in the right direction. It gives people in positions of power, who want to do right by the populace, the chance to engage with the views, opinions, and challenges that students such as myself have endured or come up with in relation to youth violence.

Change correlates to “the act or instance of making someone or something different.” Change begins with us, and that includes you, the reader. From students, teachers, parents, school administrators, community leaders, and all the way up to government officials, it is our responsibility to help prevent the anguish which youth violence brings about. In my essay I definitely focus on broader prospects than the prompt demands, but the point still stands that even as just a lone person you can help bring attention to and advocate for the cease of youth violence. By staying informed and keeping an open mind to new developments on youth violence, you are already helping to support the cause of ending it once and for all. Shedding light on ongoing detrimental activities is precisely how you gather the particular people who care to put an end to them and are also qualified to do so. Youth violence will not just disappear in a day, it will take time and considerable amounts of diligent work to even make a noticeable dent in it, but with compassion and a potent will to see it gone we can all assist in reducing the risk of it and reaching out to those who have already been impacted in negative ways because of its continued existence.

All quoted definitions used in this essay were either paraphrased or taken directly from google.com after typing the desired word into the search bar.



ESSAY 12

LILLY PROVANCE

STEAM Academy

Have you ever experienced youth violence? Every day 12 kids die to youth violence and another 32 are shot. I want to express my concerns on gun violence and I want to explain how I think we can make it better. Did you know people failing to store their guns properly has led to the deaths of teens, kids, toddlers and even infants. Gun violence can be stopped but it's not going to be easy we need everyone to help. That's why I'm going to tell you how it affects everyday life for someone my age what causes youth violence and how we can stop it.

First, I just want to say that at this point in my life and in this generation gun violence is everywhere and I want to tell you how it is for someone like me. 4.6 million American children are kept at home where a gun is loaded and accessible and about 68% of gun-related incidents at schools the gun that was used was from family, friend or relative. In my house nobody has a gun and my mom refuses to store one in the house and is right for this because if someone was to get a hold of it and hurt someone purposely or accidentally there's trouble either way. I have been shock when going to a friends house and just seeing a gun laying around even if there is young children around. Going somewhere and simply looking at the tv or scrolling through my phone I often see different kinds of gun violence whether its an article about a shooting or a threat to my own school.

Next, I want to talk about the things that are causing youth violence that I know of and have seen happen and go on with people. One main thing that normally causes someone to resort to gun violence I would like to point out is bullying, it most likely frequently brought up in schools and can lead to someone causing violence if they are bullied a lot. When someone feels alone and that things can't get better and no one understands them or can help they will sometimes resort to violence. Same goes for when people date, even for younger people having problems in a relationship or dating in general can lead to strong emotions like someone being really mad or upset. I would also like to say how about 90% of the people that are killed due to that kind of violence are girls. Overall a

lot of stressful school things like dating and bullying can lead someone down the wrong path of violence and that's something we want to try to avoid besides they don't have to date now anyways they'll have plenty of time for that when they are older.

To continue, a main thing I really wanted to go over was how to avoid youth violence and what I think I can do to stop things like shootings before they happen. When it come to the kids I want them to see other people like them and realize they aren't the only ones going through bad things and that there really are many people that can relate to what they feel and think I feel that they should meet others that are like them, someone they can relate to and get help if they need it. I think any kid that thinks about gun violence or any kind of violence needs help to realize it's not going to help them at all and their life is just going to end up worse after that and things aren't always bad and can get better for them. I want kids to be taught themselves how to spot the signs of another possibly shooting or hurting others so that they could tell someone or possibly help that person out. Especially if the person feels more comfortable talking to someone their age and would understand more opposed to an adult. As expressed, I just really want to prevent youth violence and make people realize that it's not going to solve anything if they do think about it and that they can get help and talk to other people.

In conclusion I just want to be able to prevent Youth violence as efficient and gently as possible that's still easy. I just want to restate a little on previous things like keeping guns stored safely and how something as not storing firearms safely can lead to youth violence. Youth violence for someone my age is something that comes up often and for future generations I don't want that to be the case. For someone showing signs of youth violence they should get help and know they're not alone and that people can and will help them. All in all I want schools to be safer, Youth violence to be prevented and save lives that could be taken by youth violence and help people so that way the world can be all the more safer.



ESSAY 13

NATHAN ROBINSON

Early College Middle School

Youth Violence is slowly, but definitely, crippling our society as we know it. What exactly is youth violence you may ask? Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people, roughly ages 10-24. Youth violence is a serious issue at hand because it not only harms youths, but poisons the community and has been doing just that for decades! Youth violence is a global issue and has affected many young people that are flowing with potential, if not everyone in some type of way, including their family's past, and needs to change.

I myself am one of many witnesses who have experienced youth violence. I've seen it in multitudes of communities, such as my own, abusing you'd never expect a peer to endure, merciless taunts and cruelty, and the lasting impacts of it all. I've seen it and endured it, and I have seen many others in psychological and physical pain. Struggling to the point where most ways you'd think of to help them would only make it worse. Every single school I've gone to and my friends have gone to usually have had at least one bully that manages to make someone's life harder than it already is. Differences can happen, change can happen, but everyone needs to work together as a whole. We can get through this pain with each other, and not go through this alone.

There's a finite amount of causes of youth violence in communities such as my own, that may even seem infinite to some. There are many issues resulting in youth violence that may not be able to be completely erased, but can be mended and discouraged. A few such as taunting, spreading lies and painful information that was never meant to be said, attacking, threats and mental trauma installed in the minds of young people. And all of this is just the tip of the iceberg, there are countless amounts of situations that can build up and weld into the hearts of others and can even change their personality, and even who they view themselves to be. Everyone deserves a chance to change, and if we just lose hope in all the "bad apples" and toss them away, then what kind of reputation of good individuals do we claim ourselves to have?

We are going through dangerous times, and sometimes it may just feel like the light is too far away to reach, or that you shouldn't even deserve to reach it or try. Yes, I have been there, and I'm sure somewhere in each of our lives,

the majority of us have as well. We as a community, all of us, need to prioritize helping each other and building up everyone as a whole, instead of dividing, picking people out, and only choosing those who we feel are "worthy". If we strive to build each other up as equals, then look at what's going on here in this world and what you, yourself are doing for others. One way I believe we truly move forward is if we all move together and at least try to bring groups and different kinds of people together, and teach them how they can get through their struggles as they're united with other unique people. We all have different stories and have gone through different types of hardships, and even though many of us feel so different from one another, we still can certainly sympathize with one another, and maybe, just maybe, we can even empathize with others as well and expand our kindness and support with others through our experiences with one another and be the people that we have actually dreamed to be able to be.

Youth Violence purely, should be lost from our communities, sooner rather than later. Youth violence has made me experience deeply wounded people. Some of them I often see just smile through it and pretend the effect was never there. And sometimes they even feel like that's the most they can do to subside the pain, instead of opening up the wound to make it burn for a little bit but then be able to heal, they keep it locked up. Sealed shut to embed in their minds, somewhere there, unattended and broken. There are many causes of youth violence, too many situations, too many possibilities of dismay and burdens left onto your soul, there's corruption in what hasn't been told to us, and less of an advantage to combat these situations. It only takes 1 person to lift others up and raise communities. As the communities we are in ourselves, why stop there? We should come together for a stronger structure, more sustained lifelines, and more peacefulness left in our minds and learn, learn how to deal with these situations and sympathize with others, and learn to work together for one another and restore these poisoned and divided communities, sooner, rather than later. If we don't all act soon then there's going to be another victim that could've been avoided. In conclusion, Youth Violence is crippling our society and we all need to work as a united group to rebuild the damage that has been done and is still going on.



ESSAY 14

JAXSON SAMS

Early College Middle School

Youth Violence is a real problem,
from bullying,
to prejudice,
a daily occurrence around the globe.

Everywhere
from head to toe
there's violence and pressure
and kids being hurt and abused
by mean their parents or guardians
or people they barely know.

But not just from adults
are the youth being hurt.
For not just one group of people
is at fault for what is done.

Violence has many causes
drugs,
alcohol,
abuse.
Many time a day,
do people drink
and their emotions sway,
and they hit their kids like fools.
Bad parents
leads to bad kids
leads to violence in our homes and schools.

12 children were shot dead
just yesterday alone.
Parents wrongfully believe
their guns are hidden,
their kids find them
and use them for violence.

The leading cause of death among youth
is homicide.

Which is 40% of all homicides,
and the leading cause of death for youth.

19% of students
were bullied in school 2 years ago.
Which is about $\frac{1}{4}$ of students
bullied every day.

A students peers
can be miscreants and delinquents.
These peers have bad influences on the students
and give them wrong ideas on how to act.

Action shows
or fighting games,
things some kids watch or play
everyday.
These can both have an impact
on someone's tendencies to be violent.

But this can be stopped
by intervening when seen fit,
and helping when someone's in need.
When you see a kid
in danger in any way
don't just walk by.
Ask them,
Are you okay?



ESSAY 15

LUCAS SMITH

STEAMM Academy

Have you ever wondered why youth violence happens? Well, imagine you're in school and someone starts making fun of you, or someone else. That person could be called a bully. Many times, a bully or the victim could use violence in retaliation. When that youth resorts to violence, they can find many different kinds of weapons, including guns. One way a youth could find a gun, is in their own home. The parents own a weapon that may be unlocked and not in a protected location. However, in inner cities, youth may also find these weapons in the street or from gang affiliates. Youth violence can also happen if a person gets into a verbal fight, loses control and fights become physical. It can also affect people's lives by the violent youth being sent to detention or suspension from their school and in worse cases juvenile prison or adult prison. For the victim and their family, youth violence can end in depression, suicide, or murder/loss of life leaving the family to mourn.

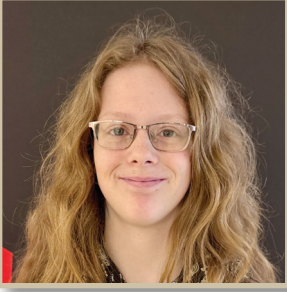
Violence has affected me personally because my parents divorced due to physical and emotional violence in my home. Now instead of living in one home with both parents, my time is split between them and I have 2 homes. I was emotionally affected by the memories of what happened.

There are many causes of violence in my community. Ohioheals.org accumulated data on youth trauma and states, "Of the 25,700 youth victims of violence, more than two-fifths (~11,500) were victims of domestic violence". This shows how one of the many causes of

youth violence is domestic violence. Ohioheals.org also states "Simple assault was the most serious offense for 42% of youth victims while 15% of youth were victims of a sex offense (e.g., fondling and rape). Half of all assaults (aggravated and simple) involved boys, and more than 75% of sex offense victims were girls". This information tells us that we need to be watching out for youth at risk for sexual assault and reporting the information to the correct agencies, such as Dept of Children and Family Services, so they can intervene before the situation becomes worse.

One way I can help reduce youth violence in my community is by utilizing the "See Something, Say Something" policy in my school district. This policy encourages me, and other students, to report activities or suspected activities of violence, such as bullying, victimization, threats of violence, or other means of youth violence. In other parts of my community, I can use 9-1-1 to alert authorities if I see violence in my neighborhood or alert an adult.

In conclusion, youth violence is a tragedy in our country that may be caused by increasing rates of domestic violence in the homes. We need to be strong members of the community to do our part to protect our youth and protect the citizens of our communities. We also need to continue to push the enforcement of rape and sex offense and sexual assault and encourage victims to speak out. We also need to protect the victims after they have reported what has happened.



ESSAY 16

MILEENA SPEICHER

Crenshaw Middle School

In many schools there is bullying, bullying can cause many problems for children and adults. Even a tiny thing such as name calling can seriously go a long way. Many younger and older children or teenagers are getting bullied or being the bully, even bullying on the internet can cause hurt in a child's mental state. Bullying usually happens due to maybe parents arguing at home, family issues and other issues. Bullying is not a helpful thing going on in schools, some bullying can lead to self harm of other students if consistent. Bullying really does mess with your mental state many children including myself gets hurt mentally some children get hurt physically due to bullying. Even a 1st grader could be a victim of bullying or be the bully, which could cause depression, anxiety and more. Violent people is scary but violent kids is just getting out of hands. Parents need to deal with this because being a victim made me feel unsafe even in school, it causes me to over think a lot. There are many songs about bullying or insecurity and self harm, which i find some of them helpful. It would seriously make a huge difference if some people stepped up to help others.

Many children get threatened causing them to not snitch on the bully. Many children lie about it which is not helping! People need to see the side of bullying where its causing many issues around everyone, the bully may think its funny but its not. Imagine being 7 years old and getting bullied or hurt until your 18, that would be terrible and that is one of the many reasons why it needs to stop. Not only are children getting hurt in this mess but some of their parents are to. Being a victim to any type of bullying messes with you, mentally or physically. You must be wondering 'well how can we stop it?' Well i have an answer. Most children get this awful behavior by seeing it outside so all we have to do is be kinder to one another. Don't argue in front of your child, don't argue period. Life is full of surprises one of those 'surprises' shouldn't be finding your kid crying from being bullied. So you as either a child or adult need to step up and do the right thing, may that be comforting your child or asking your child to stop. Sometimes even asking your child to stop is not a solution sometimes discipline is the

answer, that does not mean bully your child, that means teach them respect and to behave.

Even you and me as one single person saying something, it helps! You could go on a social media app and try and spread some love, it could go a long way. Children should not have to deal with this. They should feel safe, not be scared of another child. Show your children, friends, family how much you care for them and appreciate them in your life. Show children they are not alone. Nobody's alone when we have each other, you could be across the world or right beside me i'm here for you no matter what i promise. You should always remember 'what's always on a persons face is not what's always in their heart', if you have no clue what that means it means even if a persons smiling on the outside they could be crying on the inside. I don't care if a wars going on i am here for you. Sometimes when im sad i go on social media and look at peoples comments and see kindness flood in. Somebody may be going through something and you would have no clue, right? Wrong, if you spread kindness you will know what someone's going through just stop the bullying please. No one likes a bully, no one. And if you are getting bullied, tell someone. I don't care how many threats you have gotten just tell someone. Protect someone help someone or help yourself. You can tell your mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, uncle, or anyone just tell someone. Let's talk about cyber bullying cyber bullying is bullying on social media or the internet which is not ok at all, cyber bullying can cause many problems one way to solve it is to tell a trusted friend or adult or just delete social media as long as they are not spreading rumors, if they are, get an adult to help you.

Being afraid is scary but so are bullies if you are scared tell someone, relieve your stress and hurt. I understand how you feel and im going to tell you something I didn't know why i was being bullied. Your perfect!! Your very much perfect and amazing, being you is the most amazing thing you could possibly do. So don't be scared to smile show them amazing bright teeth its you, its apart of you. It's who you are, if someone's going to



bully you for it then its their loss everyone should love you, for you. You should not have to act like someone your not to fit in because you are perfect being you. If you needed to hear this i love you for you. Bullying can cause suicidal behavior and more mental issues and if someone a child goes through with it you have that guilt inside you for a long time. Parents need to discipline or discuss this with their children, children should feel safe at school not afraid to go because their going to be bullied. School is meant to be a safe place, not a place where children are crying and hurt. Stop the bullying in your school, neighborhood and home.

Let's talk about teasing. Teasing is where you are calling someone names, making fun of their Clothing, style, music taste, and more. Even teasing hurts kids it makes them change themselves for everyone. A lot of kids fake smiles or fake laughs which is not ok. Children should be able to laugh and smile freely not be afraid to show their teeth or laugh. Most parents don't acknowledge this type of behavior, or they persuade it. Which needs to stop letting this behavior continue is like letting a fire burn, it hurts anyone who is stuck in it. It happens a lot in younger grades anyone under 18 it bothers a lot, kids are being animals to other children. Please stop this behavior it's your choice one life takes a lot of room.

I know this behavior needs to stop and I assume you should agree stop this for now on stop children hurting.





ESSAY 17

ARIANNA WILLIAMS

Early College Middle School

Youth violence is a common occurrence. Youth violence is when young people participate or experience violent or dangerous activities. Youth violence is a problem because many lives have been lost because of it. Youth violence is very common in my hometown.

Personally, youth violence has affected my life by giving me PTSD/Trauma. Sometimes people in my neighborhood get into arguments and they end up getting in either a physical fight or could even get into a fight where they use words to hurt each-other. When people in my neighborhood fight, they often end up getting injured or killed. Youth violence can affect people in many ways, but most of the time can cause people to develop PTSD/Trauma. Youth violence has not only affected my life, but has also affected my peers life's.

There are many causes of youth violence. Some of the main causes of youth violence include issues at home, peer pressure, neglect, neighborhood issues, trauma, drugs, and alcohol. There are also many types of youth violence, such as, hitting, bullying, fighting, homicide, gang activity, and stealing. Drugs and alcohol are one of the main causes of youth violence. If somebody is taking drugs or drinking alcohol, it could really affect them. When people take drugs or drink alcohol it puts them under the influence and they can't think straight, which could cause them to do things they didn't want to or that they didn't even know they did. Another main cause is neglect at home. Being neglected at home could cause somebody to grow up not knowing wrongs from rights. Somebody that grows up not knowing

wrongs from rights could be a really bad thing, and they might think that being violent with people is okay when it's not. Sometimes, people in my community could also just participate in youth violence for the fun or thrill of it. People who participate in youth violence could make the victim so fed up to where the victim might even harm themselves. We need to do something to help prevent youth violence in our communities.

Youth violence is a very serious issue in communities across the world. To help prevent youth violence in our community, we could talk to young people that have experienced youth violence and ask them how we could support them. We can help young people by offering them counseling or offering them to go to an intervention group. Young people could also talk to trusted adults if something is happening. Talking to a trusted adult or going to an intervention group could help somebody because it gives them a chance to open up. If you open up to somebody, they could try to help you with whatever you're going through, or whatever you've been through. If you don't open up to somebody and talk about it then you wouldn't have the chance to recover from it, or even attempt to fix it.

In conclusion, violence is a very common occurrence in our communities and neighborhoods. Youth violence has not only affected my life, but others too. There are many forms and causes of youth violence. It also is a very serious problem in many communities and needs to be addressed more often.



ESSAY 18

KAYSON WILLIAMS

STEAM Academy

Has youth violence affected your life in some way, have you seen youth violence in play? Well, youth violence is a physical force or power to threaten others verbally or physically. It also uses young people, that are the victim or the offender. Have you ever experienced youth violence in youth life?

How has youth violence affected people's lifestyles? According to the internet, "Youth violence can lead to serious injuries, disabilities, and even death." And it also states, "Youth violence can damage relationships with family and friends, and can lead to social isolation." This shows that youth violence can be very harmful in many ways in life by making the victim(s) more vulnerable and increasing the rate of the victim(s) killing or harming themselves or family, in a way to try and escape the offender(s) or bully. Also, people who see abuse or get abused are more likely to kill or kill the abuser along with others. Overall, youth violence is harmful to all people involved and should be reported immediately.

What are some of the causes of youth violence in other communities? According to the internet, "Certain mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and conduct disorders, can increase the likelihood of violent behavior." It also states, "Young people who have been victims of violence or have displayed aggressive behavior in the past are at a higher risk of engaging in violence themselves." This shows that people who do bad actions or bad behavior acts have a higher chance than regular people to be involved in a school shooting, bullying, or maybe world

chaos events but that is mostly at a low level to happen. People who have drug problems may also be involved in those actions by selling drugs to kids, or influencing kids to do bad actions, or make them hold a weapon that the kids could use on others or themselves when they get mad. Overall, kids should stay away from doing drugs or finding weapons and using them in public occasions.

What can people do to reduce the level of youth violence in others or their communities? According to the internet, "Reduce children's exposure to violence in the media and in the community." It also states, "Encourage young people to understand and appreciate different perspectives, and to treat others with respect." This shows that people can reduce the levels of youth violence by doing many acts of kindness towards the young people by making them feel loved or tell them if they ever see youth violence they should always tell if possible. This will make the youth feel more comfortable interacting with people and staying away from the bad things in life and try to help others to stay away from youth violence just from one person discussing youth violence. Overall, people can reduce youth violence in many ways in their communities.

Have you ever experienced youth violence in youth life? Youth violence has affected many people's lives in different ways, many people have different ways to cause and handle youth violence, and many people have ways to solve youth violence. So does youth violence affect your life in some way and have you seen youth violence in play?





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