

### **Youth violence**

Youth violence plays a huge part in modern-day society. There have been countless victims here in America as well as in other places. I am here to address this matter because this violence has not only affected others but also me. Violence has affected my life in various ways. I remember when I was about four or five years old, my older cousin Eva had run out on Christmas Day with her then-boyfriend Anthony without permission, we called her to ask her to come home and no matter how much I begged she kept repeating the same thing "Nothing is going to happen, Summer, I will be okay." Later that evening she was found dead in the snow with a gunshot wound to the head. My Seventeen-year-old, five-month-old pregnant cousin had been shot by her boyfriend. That day gave us my little cousin Lailani who was her child and now I've been taking care of her for eight years and she is now nine years old. I've been taking care of her since I was five and it's affected me because she is disabled and it's way different than taking care of a standard child, but I'm happy that she made it. I also remember that over the summer, my cousin Samiir had been shot by one of his friends with a gun and he also didn't make it, he was only nineteen years old. This really hurt me when I found out because I saw him three years prior to the accident and right before I was supposed to see him, he died. This violence has affected me in many ways for as long as I can remember and it's still happening today.

Most people who use this violent behavior don't have motives but some of them do. The most common reason why people resort to violence like this is that things may go on at home or something goes on at school. People who go through bullying are some of the main people that use this violent behavior. This bullying could be active during school hours or when they are at home, I have experienced bullying based on my race and the way that I look and that has caused me to have some suicidal thoughts. People may also use this behavior because of harassment or abuse they have experienced. When I was in 6th grade I had been sexually harassed by one of my classmates and that incident caused me to act out toward him, and when my brother was in his late

teenage years, he went through substance abuse, which caused him to act out and he went to jail on gun and drug possession charges and I didn't see him for four years. But one of the biggest reasons why people use violence is because they are exposed to this type of violence at home or they may see things with violence in it, but when they see actions like those take place, those people may think it's okay for them to use that behavior, and some even think it's "cool" to act out in the form of violence. Those things are serious matters and can cause violent behavior that could affect others around them.

Youth violence is a very hard thing to stop, and people have tried to do it for years but there are many failed attempts. Although it may be difficult to stop this, there is one thing that may help prevent youth violence, and that is just to start checking up on your children. Parents and guardians need to start checking up on and paying attention to their children's behavior, because maybe if they talk to them about what may be bothering them it can prevent them from taking it out on people that did nothing wrong, but one way I can help is to also go and observe people's behavior and when I see someone that might be sad and check up on them and see what they might need, or when I see someone being mistreated or when there are clear signs of them being mistreated, I can talk to them and get them the help they need. But what people need to do is to listen to people and pay attention to people when they show signs of violent behavior because people in today's society stopped caring about those signs and have become desensitized to this type of behavior and it has caused those people to be more apathetic towards those people which makes the situation worse. Maybe if we listen to them, we will hear the cry for help that they have been giving us and maybe we can stop youth violence.

## It Only Takes One Bullet

On April 9, 2016 I lost my godmother Lauren Membreno due to gun violence who was only 23, she was a very important person in my life. She always had the brightest mood even when she was at her lowest. She was always around me and my family and helped out my mom when she worked extra shifts. She'd always find things for us to do whether it was going to the park, coloring, or she'd create stuff using what she had at home. The night she was shot I was home with my grandma, she got a call and she started crying out of nowhere as her husband rushed into the room I was trying to figure out what had happened. I didn't know what to do so I went into my room and waited for my mom to get home. When my mom arrived she asked my grandma what happened. I only knew Spanish to a certain level at the time so I had no idea what she said. When my mom entered the room I asked what happened she looked at me with pain in her eyes and said "Lauren was shot". The room went silent. I froze not knowing what to do or say so I just cried. My family and I rushed to the hospital as soon as we could, there we found more family. We spent almost four hours at the hospital that night. I wasn't able to see my godmother for one last time because I was too young and those were the hospital rules. The day of her funeral is a day I'll never forget, all the tears, sad faces, and goodbyes.

Youth violence is caused by so many different things whether it's through social media or seen in person. Nowadays teens around the ages of fourteen to eighteen are more affected by youth violence than others, especially through social media. Teenagers see pictures or videos of people having guns and showing them off, they then think it's cool and content like this puts them in great danger. They have the need to be like others and they then end up joining gangs, and using weapons. The worst part of all this is the risk youths put on their life by making these decisions.

I think of many ways for the community to make a stop to youth violence. I think schools should open up more after school clubs such as in, sports, music, games, organizations, etc. Clubs like these will give the students a better chance to hang out with their friends and peers after school so that way they are not outside worried about what could happen. We should also get more security inside buildings as in libraries, public gyms, and stores. This would give our community a better chance of more peace.

In conclusion I believe violence can be started by the environment we grow up in, or how we were raised. I also understand that not everyone may not have gone through the same things I have. But we should all be able to support each other and care for one another when we need it.

## The Streets

Alone in the streets, I can hear,  
The sound of footsteps coming near,  
From the darkness a shadow appeared,  
I could see their smile as I gasped in fear,  
My highschool bully was back,  
He stood in front of me, clutching his bat,  
“Miss me?” He said as he laughed,  
I wanted to run, but I was trapped,  
He came closer and closer, raising his bat,  
He grabbed my arm and SMACK,  
I fell to the ground, blood dripping from my nose,  
I tried to escape, but I was too slow,  
He grabbed my hoodie and pulled me back,  
He balled his fists up and WHACK,  
My eye was swollen and my teeth were cracked,  
I opened my mouth, too scared to scream,  
Instead I told him, “Why me?”  
“Because you're too weak to say anything, you won't fight, you're a loser!” He said,  
Those words filled my head with nothing but dread,  
He hit me a few more times until he was done with me,  
He let go of my arms and let me be,  
Back into the darkness he went,  
Vanishing, and ending my torment,  
Frozen in fear, I collapsed on the sidewalk all alone,  
I sat there for a few more minutes until I ran back home,

It's been a few weeks since the incident, and I'm still living in fear,  
Sometimes I lie awake at night, my eyes filled with tears,  
“Am I really that weak?” I say in my head,  
Sometimes, I just wish I was dead,  
If only there was an end to bullying and pain,  
We don't need anymore bullies, we need a change!  
Maybe instead of taking our anger out on others,  
We could try to solve issues by talking to one another,  
If we all stepped in, we could really make a difference,  
But if we don't, the bullies will continue to remain victorious.

*Non-Fiction*

*Being a bullied person is hard.*

*People call me names, so unashamed.*

*That put me through so much pain.*

*No one can comprehend.*

*Being bullied made me feel like I'm an invisible person.*

*Made me scared to share my opinion.*

*Talking to other people was so hard for me.*

*Made me think that no one cares about me.*

*Having no friends that I can talk to or share my feelings with.*

*Everyone in my class thinks that I'm a jerk.*

*They think that I'm a useless girl.*

*The pain wound me like a knife.*

*Bullies have no clue*

*On what they are doing.*

*Youth violence.*

*It's far worse than silence.*

*There are many causes.*

*Been so jealous of someone better than you. Having*

*a bad history that can't ever change. Defense*

*yourself by violence*

*Want to feel like you are so important and strong?*

*Having a health problem.*

*All that causes violence.*

*But there is always a solution for everything. Help*

*people that get bullied by stopping the bully. Tell an*

*adult if there is any fight going on.*

*Try to solve the problem not to make it worse.*

*There is one thing everyone should remember.*

*Violence had never solved the problem.*

*Don't use violence to solve problems use your words.*

*Putting others down doesn't raise you up.*

Fiction

How much more is needed of me  
When will this deep pain of mine end  
Violence has taken a big toll on my youth years  
It had all started when I was 10

All my life, it had seemed like there was no one to call mom or dad  
They had strayed from my life  
They couldn't even hold a job, leaving me emaciated  
We never had a principled relationship

Every night, it felt as if I was imprisoned in my own mind  
It was as if I could never escape the ferocity of life  
Even in school, violence always caught up  
I could never keep up my grades, and had been bullied for my looks and attire

School had felt like a haven compared to my home  
Whenever I tried to hide, my parents would always overpower my cries and demands to stop  
Eventually the cops had done an investigation and found them unable to raise a child  
This then led to me being sent to a Foster Care Agency

After a few months, I had been accepted into this alright family  
I had went to a new school where nobody would agree with my life style  
They had bullied me even though I had done nothing to them  
It started feeling like my old life, since the area was similar to that of which I was born in  
I also had no friends, leaving me into a stage of depression and hatred

I had gotten addicted to vape pens, and whatever else I could get my hands on  
It made me feel a sense of acceptance and peace  
I had quit school a few months after this  
I mean, who even needs to go to school when you have parents that could give you money

My parents always pushed me in a corner of questions  
With there cries and demands for me to return to school, I had left them

Sure I had no job, but I had connections

A few old friends took me in

We had smoked as long as we wanted, with no worry or regrets

It was like a room from heaven

Because of this, we had a pile of debt to pay

Which then led to me running away and having nowhere to go

I had eventually been sent to prison for around 14 years, with a \$10,000 bond

I know that what I did in my life was wrong

But I also know that youth violence can always be stopped

If we all have a peaceful attitude, and know from right to wrong, we can overcome this tragedy

FICTION

Without you

**November 12, 2020**( Jackie POV)

I was walking to school when I noticed my best friend Georgina walking to school with a boy. Her parents were so strict, I was surprised to see her with a boy. I always thought her parents drove her to school. She walked right past me, she looked back but turned back around. I was alone the whole day. At lunch, I went to go sit with her but her new friends pushed me away and called me names.

**November 28th 2020** (Georgina's POV)

I miss Jackie, I'm not happy with my new so-called friends. Caleb, my boyfriend is hitting me everyday because he catches me looking at her, I always turn around when she notices I was staring at her. They keep calling her names, I always want to tell them something but quickly close my mouth knowing what would happen if I did. I miss her so much. I shouldn't have done anything with him, not if it was going to end up like this. He said he loved me, he said he didn't mean to hit me, I just made him angry and he hit me by accident. Yesterday he punched me in the arm, it left a big bruise. I went to the bathroom during 4th period to go touch it up and fix it. I was wiping off the foundation that was already on top of it, I put a new coat on it. She walked in. Jackie walked past me and looked at my arm, I pulled down my sleeve and ran out.

**December 1st 2020**(Jackie POV)

Georgina won't talk to me, she always turns around and her friends always say mean things about me. I never thought she would be the type of person to hang out with people like that. I miss who she was. Why did she have to change? Why did she choose them over me? Georgina changed completely. In a way I can not explain, not just her appearance. I haven't seen her smile in weeks. In the bathroom last week I saw her cover a big bruise on her arm. I wonder what happened, maybe she just fell or something.

**December 15th 2020**( Jackie POV)

I haven't seen Georgina in two weeks. Her parents called me asking what happened to her, and where was she. I didn't know what to say, I didn't want to snitch on her. Before I could reply to her parents. I heard a loud cry for help outside. I ran out my front door, I looked around and tried to see where it was coming from. I saw a girl running down the street being chased by a group of men, clearly armed. As she was screaming and running a loud BANG, was heard. It wasn't just one, it was multiple, maybe like 5. It was Georgina, I saw her lifeless body drop to the floor. Her "boyfriend" and his friends were laughing and kicking her while she was on the floor. I couldn't move, suddenly it hit me. My best friend was just shot right in front of me. I saw many people start to run towards her body while the men left. I called 911, and the ambulance took her away.

**December 20th 2020**( Jackie POV)

It's been five days since the incident. I haven't slept, eaten, showered, or left my room. I don't want to talk to anyone right now. I can still hear her screams, her crying for help. I should have done something, it's my fault. Her parents found out what happened to her. Her boyfriend had been abusing her for weeks. He did unthinkable things to Georgina, he only did it because she had sent him inappropriate pictures and he had been black mailing her. This shouldn't have happened. The police have not been able to find him or his gang. I'm scared to go outside knowing he's out there.

June 4th 2021( Jackie POV)

It's been seven months since her death. Caleb was caught and so was his gang. Their court was a couple days ago, they were sentenced to life, they were charged as adults since they were already eighteen. I know she would be happy right now. I've been going to therapy, eating more, spelt, and showered. I'm back to my normal self. I miss her so much everyday. I know she would want me to move on, it's going to be hard but I know that's what she wants. I've decided to make posts on social media speaking out about gang violence, abuse, and so many other things. It's doing really well. I know she would be proud of me.

Bullying, abuse, harassment, drugs, gangs are all causes of youth violence. If any of those things are happening to you or someone you know, tell someone you can trust. If the people around you try to force you into doing something you don't like, they are not your friends and it's probably best to leave.

## Do The Write Thing

Living in Chicago, the issue of violence is something that affects me every day. The news is full of stories of shootings, murders, and gang violence. It's hard to escape the reality that this city has one of the highest rates of violence in the country. Growing up in Chicago, I've seen how violence can tear families apart. I have friends who have lost loved ones to gun violence and have seen the pain and grief it causes. It's heartbreaking to see how easily someone's life can be taken away by a single bullet. The problem of violence in Chicago is complex, and there are no easy solutions. Poverty, lack of access to education and job opportunities, and systemic racism all contribute to the violence that plagues the city.

Gangs and the drug trade also play a significant role in the violence. As a resident of Chicago, I often feel frustrated and powerless in the face of the violence that surrounds me. It's easy to feel like nothing can be done to stop the cycle of violence. However, I know that there are people and organizations working to address the problem. One of the ways that some communities in Chicago are working to reduce violence is by investing in programs that provide opportunities for young people.

These programs include after-school activities, mentorship, and job training. By giving young people positive alternatives to gangs and the drug trade, we can help prevent them from getting involved in violence. Another approach is to improve community policing. This means building relationships between police officers and the communities they serve. By building trust and understanding, police officers can work with community members to identify and address the root causes of violence.

This approach has been successful in some neighborhoods in Chicago, but it requires long-term commitment and resources. There are also efforts to address the root causes of violence, such as poverty and lack of access to education and job opportunities. These are long-term solutions that require significant investment and political will, but they are essential to addressing the problem of violence in Chicago. In conclusion, as a resident of Chicago, the issue of violence is something that affects me deeply. It's a complex problem with no easy solutions, but I believe that by working together, we can make a difference.

We need to invest in programs that provide opportunities for young people, improve community policing, and address the root causes of violence. It's time to take action and make Chicago a safer and more peaceful city for all of its residents

How has violence affected my life?

When my cousin got shot I lost myself, when you lose yourself sometimes you don't recover. You can't sit and tell someone that they will get over it if you haven't lost someone, even if you did. When my mom called me and told me I was heart broken, I felt like my world was shattering apart. To make it even worse my cousin had just graduated from st sabina and turned 14 but weeks after he was shot in front of his grandma house. I don't think she will recover, I was crying and crying like i never have before. Because none should have to bury someone that young and innocent, or any one innocent in general. You or your mom shouldn't have to wake up to that nightmare thinking that it's just some scary dream that's getting worse by the day. Then people take it out on God like he did it but really it's the shooter's fault, God is always there and always will be there for you so why turn your back on him like it's not going to be okay and be better by the day. You have to have trust in God if you dont you will have to pay the consequences

We are influencing gun violence so much that younger kids are using gun violence. Some people think that gun violence is a joke when it is not, gun violence can end in very horrible ways. Some survive, some don't, and sometimes it's not even the people who are a part of gangs or who threaten people. People take out their anger on the wrong people because shooting someone who didn't do anything to you is far from wrong. The main people influencing gun violence to become more active and bring more people to be causing gun violence, are the main ones who would be heartbroken if they got a call or someone told them their family member or friend was shot. None wants to get that call, because if that was me I wouldn't want that.

We can stop youth gun violence by stopping influencing our songs, body , and language. I can watch the way I do things and think about the people, because I need to do what's right and not be selfish. We really need to watch the things we do , and say. I know and you know right from wrong and leaving the youth to handle gun violence on their own is wrong. That's petty and selfish and we are the ones influencing them and putting them under the pressure to make them feel like they have to follow the wrong footsteps, you are probably saying that they shouldn't have chosen the decision but try to put yourself in their shoes, let that sink in. How are we going to start something and not find the solution, or if you didn't do it help find a way to end it or a solution if you did or did not start it. Because let's be honest if that was you or me we would want help. There are many ways to help and leaving the youth to solve this on their own after we started it is wrong, not saying that you have to help with every problem but this is one that you should help with.

# **Violence**

**How has violence affected my life? Violence has affected many lives, including mine. When I am walking to school and coming home from school there is always that thought in my head. That thought in my head that someone could be right behind me or right around the corner. Because of violence sometimes I do not feel safe walking around at night. Some days my parents don't let me go outside or go too far from my house because of how much violence there is in Chicago. On average in Chicago, one person is killed with a gun every 6 hours. In 2022 alone there were 688 homicides.**

**All these crimes and violence in Chicago and the U.S., in general, make it so that I cannot do certain things and feel safe. Certain things like going to the park with my friends, family, or siblings. Youth violence has also affected me in other ways like in school when I look around and see people and how they're acting. Recently there have been lots of fights in my school and it's most likely because they are influenced. Violence breaks out and more and more people see it, including me. Some people even become victims of violence, and it is because of this that it just starts a cycle.**

**What are the causes of youth violence? As I was saying earlier, one of the causes of youth violence is the cycle of being influenced by the things you see happening around you or even**

online. People see violence happening around them or online and then they get influenced and eventually cause violence themselves. Another cause of youth violence is when kids have an unstable household and have lots of anger that they can't let out any other way other than violence. Youth violence in general has many causes, one last cause of youth violence is when violence is inflicted on someone by things like getting bullied, etc. Those people eventually are going to inflict violence on others.

Youth violence in Chicago is pretty bad because of all the influences and roots of it there is everywhere. What makes it all worse is that here in Chicago youth violence or violence in general is normalized around the youth. Kids are used to seeing fights, gang-related violence, bullying, and threats with weapons. At some schools, fights happen every single day and everything, even the colors of the clothes you wear can correlate to gang-related affiliations. School is not always such a safe environment for some students and sometimes it seems like a place of tension rather than a place for learning.

What can I do about youth violence? There's a solution to everything, an example is when my friends are having a conflict I know I can help prevent them from ending up fighting against each other. Another example is when I know a kid is going through something I can make sure they have someone to talk to. When I see any causes of violence and I know I can do something about it I have to take action and not just be a bystander, we all do.

## Eternal Cycle

Tell me, what if thou can't move forward?

What shall happen when there are more lives lost than created?

Now, even the youth bear arms.

Shooting each other.

Triggering bombs!

Thou has to stand up.

Thou has to speak.

Thou shall not turn the other cheek.

Indifference further suppresses the weak.

You See.

Where I'm from, the thought of hope is almost but a lie.

When you live in fear, why wouldn't you agree?

They say that it's because of this "new technology".

But this is something far in the making.

The cause of this youth violence is over-reliance on anti-social peers,

poor parental supervision,

alcohol and drug abuse,

poor educational or employment potential,

I could go on and on, but I'd be here all day.

You see, there are many factors at play.

Everyday.

I go outside and there's one thought on my mind.

"Will I die today?"

I have to look over my shoulder every minute.

I walk at a faster pace because with every second my chances of living decay.

You See.

In these streets, violence almost seems to beckon.

On these streets, addicts keep begging

On these streets,

everyone cries out for help from others.

But they think, "why Would I do something if it's not affecting Me?"

And to that, I agree.

Let us be the change we want to see.

After all, we made these streets.  
Literally.

All we need is unity.

The kids want to gang-bang because they want to fit in

It's such a shame when you hate your own skin.

The cause of this violence is trying to get in with people to whom you shouldn't even be talking.

It's killing them within

Internal pain causes an eternal cycle

So let us break the cycle of munity.

After all, isn't this our community?!

Make amends with your nonchalance.

"What can YOU do to help the situation?"

"How will YOU prevent your people's incarceration ?"

I start with the poem I wrote.

But I will only stop once all my people have hope.

Poems aren't the only thing tho.

The music I wrote talks about our strife.

I try to help the only way I know,  
I Write.

Now lend an ear because talking is a way to cope.

take a stand!

Speak out!

Do something man.!

There are so many ways to help a friend

And I encourage you to do what I did,

Help your friends.

I refuse for the cycle to start again!

The cycle shall not win.