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(This story is 100% factual)

What is violence? Violence is the action of trying to harm another being e.g., killing, hurting, or damaging something. Violence is a reoccurring thing in my community, as far as I can remember violence has been in my life and has affected me in many ways. Whether it was me being, shot at, or even witnessing violence at a young age.

The first memory I have of violence is when I was younger, maybe 6 or 7 years old. During that time, I remember looking up to the older people around the area, the older people being gangsters and drug addicts or constant weed smokers, either way that was what I grew up around and that is what I thought was cool or the right things to do. One of the earliest memories I have of violence is when I witnessed a man, I used to look up to beat on his girlfriend brutally in front of the whole neighborhood, even his own son. As I watched the events unfold in front of me it made me believe that it was ok to beat on woman and the people you love. This event caused a younger me to do the same actions that were present in my neighborhood. I did such actions all the way to the end of my elementary years.

The violence shown that day made the younger me do the same things but luckily, I had good people to help stop such behavior, but that was not the only time violence affected me. Another time violence affected me was during my birthday. During that day I was outside with my father and family coming back from a hibachi place for my birthday dinner. During that time, we were all under a bridge by the water at Anacostia having a cookout. My family danced, cracked jokes, and had fun until the group of family directly across from us had an argument with each other which led to a gun being pulled out. Then the person with the gun, who happened to be an old lady, went over to my family, and pointed the gun at us asking for somebody we did not know. Then the lady threatened us saying "Where is she" but none of my family knew what she was talking about. This angered the lady and caused her to shoot the gun upwards in the air making everybody in the vicinity run, including me. After running for about two minutes, I came to a halt and then remembered my dad didn't run but stayed back with a couple of other grownups and it made me run back to the scene because I heard more gun shots, which made me scared thinking potentially my father got shot so I ran and kept running till I made it back to the scene. Then when I arrived, I seen nobody on the ground, so I guessed everything was ok, but what I didn't see was the old lady 5 feet from me to the right with a gun pointed at me. As I looked down the barrel of that gun, I was scared then I looked the left of me and seen another person which seemed to be a girl with dreadlocks and then I heard my father who was about 10 feet behind me saying "There is kids around chill out" but then the lady started cussing us out calling me and my people tons of nasty mean words, which further scared me. Then I seen a gun pointing at me then the girl who was to the left of me moved and when she moved, all you heard was a gun shot. Then the lady dropped the gun as if she was shocked and when she did the people across from us punched her than began stopping on her head, but as I looked to the left of me, I seen the girl with dreadlocks holding her stomach bleeding just moving

side to side and I looked in her eyes and she looked in my eyes and she just dropped, bleeding out heavily. This event was traumatizing, because I could've been shot and, on the ground, but instead I watched somebody die or at least I believed she died I never seen her after so I wouldn't know. Either way the violence demonstrated scares me till this day.

One of the causes of youth violence such as this is due to where teens live. According to verywellfamily.com, "Where teens live can also have an impact on them and lead them to act more aggressively. The CDC points to several community risk factors for youth violence including diminished economic opportunities, high levels of crime, and socially disorganized neighborhoods." This is important because it shows that where youth lives plays a huge effect on the violence that youth is exposed to.

Another cause of youth violence is Domestic and child abuse. According to verywellfamily.com, Children who live with violence in the home learn by example and can become violent people as they grow up. They also are more likely to experience teen dating violence, either as a victim or an aggressor. Other contributing factors include harsh parenting styles, along with chaos in the home, neglect, and rejection." This evidence demonstrates that youth that grow up around Domestic abuse and child abuse have a higher chance of becoming violent.

We as a community can stop youth violence by showing kids better things in life. For instance, I as a youth used to demonstrate youth violence a lot, but when I obtained a community who showed me better I did better. Therefore, we can stop youth violence by showing kids better things in life. That is my responsibility and yours. To show kids all around the world the greater things in life so they do not grow up being gangsters, killers and dead before 15.