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Breaking the Cycle of Violence

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### Do The Write Thing Essay, 2014

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Lenell Hackstaff

Martin Luther King Jr. K-8 school

At 12:30, I was eating in my school cafeteria. Suddenly, it broke into a big fight. A throng of students was shrieking and hollering across the cafeteria. I noticed two students brawling, and the principal came rushing in to stop the quarrel. The students had to face the consequences.

Youth violence is a poison to our society. It is appalling what crimes some adolescents might commit. These adolescents are preventing the maintenance of a safe and stable society. Many things cause aggression in youth. This youth violence must end. As a witness, I know the cruelty of youth violence. Youth violence has affected me in many ways. It influences who I associate with. I try to socialize with peaceful people. I avoid negative peer pressure and stay away from situations that would force me to compromise my moral judgment.

Youth violence has played a role in shaping my behavior in social situations. I keep opinions that may be construed as controversial in anyway to myself. This practice of self-control helps me refrain from any dangerous altercations.

What sparks aggression in youth that leads violence? Media is one of the causes of violence. Violent and destructive video games tend to make adolescents aggressive. Television and belligerent movies are harmful to the minds of youth. Characters in violent movie scenes set bad examples for children.

Not all role models are characters in movies. According to a Boston post that I read, on April 21, 2001, two high school seniors shot and wounded several students at Madison High School. Fifteen students died and 28 were wounded. These shooters attempted to kill the "ethnic minorities" first. The clothing of the suspects showed they

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were obsessed with gangs and were thugs. This tragedy was one of the worst school shootings in U.S. history and tells how evil people can act as role models.

Another cause of youth violence is peer pressure. Some teens gain racist views by hearing adults and began assaulting fellow students of different ethnicity. Social-economic reasons can also lead to youth violence. Students form cliques based on their social classes, leading to resentment among students.

I am confronted with youth violence primarily at my school. My community and I implement many ways to reduce youth violence. One of the best ways is to restrict exposure to harmful things on the internet. The rating system on video games and movies should be strictly enforced. Consequences at schools should be harsher. Classes should meet with their guidance counselor more often to discuss topics that results in violence among students, parents, teachers, and everyone in the community. We must create an environment that fosters a sense of inclusiveness among students. This sense of belonging will prevent students from socializing in an ill type of way.

Violence is an atrocious way of releasing one's anger on another. A study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that "homicide is the second-leading cause of death among youth aged 10-24 years in the United States". Sometimes just by witnessing acts of aggression, many children become victims of youth violence. This widespread epidemic must end.

No schools and neighborhoods can become immune to youth violence, but it can be lessened. Many lives can be spared if youth violence ends **RIGHT NOW**.