BLUE RIBBON WINNERS

20TH ANNUAL STUDENT VOICES CONTEST

NO COMMUNITY has IMMUNITY

Gabriela Velaquez, Winner 2014

ILLINOIS COUNCIL AGAINST HANDGUN VIOLENCE
The Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence would like to thank all the volunteer judges who make our contest possible and in particular our Blue Ribbon Judges:

Monica Schneider, *CLTV & WGN*

Chuck Garfien, *CSN Chicago*

Elizabeth Sampson, The Poetry Center of Chicago

Patrice Perkins, Creative Genius Law
Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence
20th Annual Student Voices Contest

Winners

Alexis Johnson
Percy L. Julian HS  (Division 3, Spoken Word)

Winter Brown
Jordan Community Academy  (Division 2, Art)

Ashrith Alavilli
Bridgeport Catholic Academy  (Division 1, Poetry)

Mario Ramirez
Bridgeport Catholic Academy  (Division 1, Art)

Julia Schuurman
Taft Academic Center  (Division 2, Essay)

Maria Contreras
Edwin Forman HS  (Division 3, Art)

Alejandra Velasco
Taft Academic Center  (Division 2, Poetry)

Salvatore Tado
Bridgeport Catholic Academy  (Division 1, Essay)

David Luna-Pascua
Bridgeport Catholic Academy  (Division 1, Art)

Cristal Hermenegildo
Richard L. Daley Academy  (Division 2, Art)

Jada Netlles-Bey
King College Prep  (Division 3, Essay)
Aaliyah Taylor
Jordan Community Academy  (Division 1, Art)

Morgan Zajac
Taft Academic Center  (Division 2, Poetry)

Noemi Espinosa
Edwin Foreman HS  (Division 3, Art)

Priscila Batista
Pritzker College Prep  (Division 3, Poetry)
"What Had Happened Was..

People phony so I only got a couple homies
Ma pops the one who taught me so I always got ma tony
In ma waist, ima shoot up the place don't lemme see you for the other side looking me face to face.
I'm blowing em' and I'm reckless scratch ya' name off my checklist mess with me you gone be next snitch drive-byes don't test it. Dang, now we done shoot a lil shorty we can't even say sorry now they parents gotta worry about.
Kids playing outside and dying but I swear we wasn't tryin' I mean, I swear I tryin' and I hate to say "what had happened was" but my what had happened was really was what had happened.
I was looking for the opposition and looking from my position them kids looked just like some hitmen I'm sorry & I hope you can forgive me. Aye I'm done with this life cause I got my own kids B. Mindful of the fact that I was raised wrong and mainly by the streets.
And C with your eyes and your ears cause the plot thickens.. I went from a lost cause grabbed the remote and pushed pause on that lifestyle never again to press play it wasn't a game as I watched that Shorty lay on the ground pulseless bum bum, bum bum, bum bum, fastly my heart beat & fastly my friends fled & fastly my feet repeat a pattern of one in front of the other. And before I knew anything I was running. Faster than my train of thought, but the farther I ran the farther that train deepened into the tunnel or the thought of.. "What if that little boy meant the world to someone?"
Suddenly my feet came to a halt, along did my heart, no shocking me when you telling me that I need a new start.
I knew I couldn't let my explanation I mean my because be the cause of my entire generation getting away with these killings cause of some stupid confrontations or some stupid contemplations on killing they oppositions so I ran home to go pick up my shorty's and from their mother's eyes tearful cries.. When I asked "what happened?" she says "He's died.." then I realized that my what had happened was really was what had happened. Killer shot 3. 2 hit em'. And I was the 1 that did it."

Alexis Johnson
10th Grade
No community is immune to gun violence
If there was, the world will be in peaceful silence
Gunshots are around every small corner,
Every day there is a sound and a mourner.

So, protect the people
You should pray in a steeple

Stop the violence, tears, and blood
We need to act
So let’s bring in a contract
It is a fact that guns in a community are bad
Boy, it makes me mad
Every minute lots of people die from press of a trigger
Each day, the death gets bigger

So, I say, stop people carrying guns into communities (with the exception of Police)
This is for the greater good.

Ashrith Alavilli
4th Grade
STOP VIOLENCE

Mario Ramirez
2nd Grade
Chicago's well-known ban on guns goes back to the assassination of President Kennedy, who famously said "Ask not what your country can do for you- ask what you can do for your country." To change the reality of gun violence in my community, I can support local political candidates who are in favor of shaping the new gun laws to be in line with traditional pro gun control laws in the city of Chicago. Chicago has a history of holding a progressive liberal position when it comes to the issue of gun control laws. However, in 2010 the right-wing Supreme Court declared Chicago’s ban on handgun ownership unconstitutional. The new law forcing Chicago to allow citizens to own guns will bring more violence. Today’s laws need to reflect our city’s history of rational gun control. We need politicians who will risk a fight with the NRA (National Rifle Association) for gun control laws to keep our communities safer.

With elections for aldermen, mayors, judges, etc. nearing, now is the time to really contemplate who we want running our communities. Although I cannot vote, I can advocate for those who support gun control laws to make the environment I grow up in as safe as possible. How can I make a difference? I will do everything in my power to urge family members, friends, and community members to strongly consider candidates who will be effectively active in making these changes. Furthermore, I can volunteer in campaigns with activities appropriate for my age. As an adult, I will participate in elections of candidates who will support the nominations of Supreme Court Justices who are free from the NRA’s influence and feel as passionately about the destructiveness of American gun culture as I do.

Will more guns equal better protection from crime or just more opportunities for violence? Ask the parents of the Newton school children how they feel about the ready
availability of high-powered weapons. After Newton, our national leaders promised reform, but were scared off once again by the NRA. Communities should support courageous politicians like those behind our strict local laws. Rahm Emanuel is proposing a new ordinance that, among other things, would use special zoning rules to essentially block gun stores from operating in 99.5% of the city, which I'd campaign for. JFK called on American youth to serve others. Supporting politicians and legislation that favor gun law reform would be a fitting tribute to a president we lost to gun violence.

Julia Schuurman
7th Grade
Say No to Violence

Respect Life

Maria Contreras
10th Grade
Neighborhood Full Of Violence

You walk in, what you call a neighborhood,
you already heard the gun shots,
the tears dripping down someone's face,
the only thing that's left is the regret.

The regret for not making a change.
The regret that you could have done
something but no, not at all, no change was
made, the regret will still live on you.

The regret hurts inside you, it will not stop growing,
it just can't stop. The only thing you really
should regret is not doing something for
someone's tears, someone's life, their
happiness, their lives shouldn't end in a
gun shot, it just shouldn't end
in a neighborhood full of violence.

Alejandra Velasco
7th Grade
Gun Violence

By Salvatore Tado

Gun violence is hurting and affecting everybody. We need to stop gun violence now, before it’s too late. Every day when my parents watch the news, they turn it off saying its all negative. But I always hear kids my own age dying from guns and gangs. My mom says it’s happening for no reason that makes any sense. These kids my age are not even getting a chance to play with their friends or go play basketball. Instead they are involved in gangs and drugs. Some of them start out like me and then have nowhere else to go. So they turn to gangs or bad people.

Guns are not being used correctly. The police and people that are trained and licensed should only have a gun. The police are even being killed by trying to protect people. My papa was a policeman and every day he would leave the house not knowing what would happen at work. And some kids and teenagers are in that as well. Not a chance to survive.

Guns destroy families, lives, homes, neighborhoods, schools and parks. When guns are around and they hurt some people, things are never the same again. We as people need to stop the violence before we have no future.

Salvatore Tado
4th Grade
Handgun Violence Tree

We need to get to the root of the problem.

David Luna-Pascua
4th Grade
We just want justice!

Respect human rights

Stop violence - Stop Crime

It doesn't have to be all the time...

10,000 shootings in Chicago in the last 4 years.

Like this... in Chicago

we will take action!

Cristal Hermenegildo
8th Grade
Walking the Hallways...

Jada Bey

Walking in the hallways of King College Prep noticing the purple locker of Hadiya Pendleton, I'm reminded of violence every day. Hadiya shot and killed due to community violence. Gang Rivalry, Feuds, Bullets going in the wrong direction is community violence. But what we really should be focused on is the people in these gangs, in these feuds, the ones that are shooting the bullets with no given direction. As I walk down the hallways of my school I am reminded of the violence in my community. Fighting, Gangs, The music that is all about violence in my city.

The music plays a major role when I'm walking in the hallways. Talk of killing, stealing, hate blasting from the speakers everyone singing along. These words are encased in our minds and are leading our actions. This music revolves around gang rivalry is driving the listeners to engage in violence. All the so called rappers that are persuading my community are all felons, gang members, and are committing crimes. I know this just by walking in the hallway.

Changing this doesn't start with the guns, or the city. It starts with the accomplice. Us. Only we can change what we are doing. As a community we are all segregated into this war like way of living. If one person isn't with "us". Kill them. That shouldn't be our way of thinking. Our way of living. To change we need to come together and establish peace not only with each other but peace with ourselves. Walking the hallways I see gang signs I hear BD I hear GD. I hear and see violence.

We need a change. A solution to this. Can start with one or a few select group of people. Education plays a big role in violence. What the people may not know is that education is our most powerful weapon. Kids that drop out of school are immediately snatched up by the streets. Schools in the African American and Latino community are closing at a fast rate everyday making education access to these races very limited. Education is power... but it is also knowledge. If everyone was able to receive this they would have the knowledge to know that this crime and gang rivalry is not worth anyone's life.

When I walk down the hallway I see Hadiya. I see her telling us to stop the violence. I stop and look at her locker. I stop and look around me. I start to see a change. They start to listen. We no longer feel the need for violence. The music is no longer blasting out the speakers. We see the need of change. We stop the madness. I walk down the hallway I feel peace.
Too Many, Too Soon, Gunshots Fired, Too Wound

Sunday morning, go to church, then eat breakfast, go to work;
Sunday paper, make your bed, brush your teeth, then call a friend;
Never expecting bullets to your head.
1 too many, 1 too soon, gunshots fired, 1 more wound.

People living normal lives, happy husbands, loving wives;
Children laughing, prancing prancing, bakers baking, dancers dancing;
Target sighted, no more sighting.
1 too many, 1 too soon, gunshots fired, 1 more wound.

All this violence, all this hate, why don’t we just celebrate?
Learn to live with and love one another;
Sister to sister, brother to brother.
1 too many, 1 too soon, gunshots fired, 1 more wound.

Guns cause pain, guns cause death;
Is all this suffering worth that last breath?
So much heartbreak and so many tears;
1 too many, 1 too soon, gunshots fired, so many wounds.

How do we avoid this problem? Stop the blame be a problem solver.
Only we can make the change, and education is the game.
We are the players, here is our plan;
Way too many, way too soon, stop the gunshots, stop the wounds.

Be part of the solution and soon we will see;
Instead of death and destruction, peace and love and harmony;
Guns are bad, guns destroy.
Way too many, way too soon, stop the gunshots, stop the wounds.

Morgan Zajac 7th Grade
One Bullet, One Man, Two Words: Gun Violence  by Priscila Bautista

We are all just fragile dolls
And stiffly play soldiers
Thrown into this world
Without a warning
Of the brutality that lays ahead
With eyes too naive
To see the hate and anger
In the eyes of those behind a gun
People hidden under all of the cracks
Caused by deep rooted anger
Some of us wake up
In a neighborhood
Where the streets echo back silence
Because children are afraid
To play out on the street
Or have already had their childhood stolen
Realizing that what the man held in his hands
Was not a toy
But a mechanism used to steal dreams and lives
It was something to fear but we were too young
Too young to know the difference
Between a fireworks and the sound of gunshots
Because we hadn’t experienced violence yet
We grow up playing with toy guns
To try and get rid of the fear
That leaves us paralyzed
As we see flashes of light
While our mothers cover our ears
And humming lullabies
We are left wondering
Whether the next bullet will be aimed at us
Or the heads of loved ones
We learn not to have dreams
Because of the risk of them bleeding out
On the streets with our short life
We are still too young to be counting
The sound of bullets
Instead of sheep when we struggle to sleep
Too young to see so many bodies
Hidden behind an all too often caution line
Seeing the murderer on the news
And realizing you knew him,
We start getting used to the sound
Of death so close
Breathing on our cheeks
Waiting to get in
We are too young to know what’s wrong when
our mothers walk up to us

Grief evident in her eyes
When she says, “honey, your father was shot
today,”
That’s when we vow to make a change
Vow not to look the other way
As 1, 2, 3, 4 shots ring out at night
Claiming another life
We are surrounded by weapons
Fueled by hate
Unaffected by innocence
And stolen childhoods
From those whose hearts are still beating
To those buried 9 ft. deep
Because not everyone
Knows what a life is worth
“Daddy look at me!”
Words that may never escape a child’s lips
Because daddy’s in heaven now
Daddy’s not coming back
So we say goodbye to goodnight kisses
And the man we looked up to
Who promised never to leave our side
Gun violence
More than just two words
And more than just one life claimed
Don’t turn the page
Because there are so many poems like this
Instead open your eyes
And realize this problem is too common
Gun violence
Kills more than just people
It kills dreams
The kid, father, mother, aunt, or uncle
Might have cured cancer
Might have been the president
Might still be here
If only we had decided
That this needed to stop
So the bodies around us can stop falling
I say we are still too young
Because some of us
Will never age
Because some of us have been condensed
To nothing but a name on a tombstone
Due to one bullet
One man
Two words
Gun violence

Priscila Bautista
9th Grade
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