

Peacekeepers of **CHICAGO**



Written and Photographed by
The Polaris Charter Academy 7th Graders

Peacekeepers of Chicago



Polaris Charter Academy
7th Grade
Class of 2014

Peacekeepers of Chicago

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the Peacekeepers in our great city of Chicago. May your work inspire others the way it inspired us.

Table of Contents

Cease Fire Organization	1
Ruben Escobar	2
Rabbi Joshua Salter	4
Marilyn Pitchford	6
Patrick Holloway	8
Derrick House	8
Ameena Matthews	10
West Humboldt Park Development Council	13
Alderman Burnett	14
Isaiah Ross	16
John Groene	18
Captain Roger Bay	20
Latasha Melton	22
Community Activist Across Chicago	25
Reverend Doctor Janette Wilson	26
Pastor Pedro Windsor	28
Myrta Cruz	30
Patrick Thompson	32
Bryant Cross	34
Polaris Peacekeepers and Poetry	37
Westinghouse Peacekeepers	49
Call to Action	55
Special Thanks	57

CeaseFire

Now Known As Cure Violence

CeaseFire, also known as Cure Violence, has had a huge effect on communities in many cities. They don't stay in and wait for people to come to them for help or advice. They bring the peace to you.

One night in spring of 2004, a gang of armed men dragged a young man off the street into an alley. Instead of calling the police, the office of Ceasefire was called and Tio Hardiman responded immediately. Tio negotiated with the gunman and convinced him to put his gun away. Tio is a member of Ceasefire, and this is one of the many stories that demonstrate the power of Ceasefire to stop violence.

Dr. Gary Slutkin founded the Ceasefire organization in 1995. The organization spent five years planning a development strategy, which means that they had to plan out what the organization's goals and plans for the communities in Chicago were. Then in 2000, the Ceasefire model was launched in West Garfield, the most violent community in Chicago at the time.

In 2004 Ceasefire received funding from the state of Illinois. Original funding for Ceasefire came from local foundations and corporations, providing \$6.2 million in 2005. Due to its success they received \$9.4 million in 2006. However, in 2007, the Illinois state government decreased funding for Ceasefire. Despite the decreased funding the work is still important and continues on.

The Ceasefire model has experienced much success. In 2000, Ceasefire produced a 67% reduction in shooting in its first year, a rate of 15.5 homicides per 100,000 residents. Ceasefire had a big effect on the community, because its members are active citizens and take a stand like Tio Hardiman. Ceasefire members performed 9,000 hours of anti-gun violence activity in their community in the year 2000.

Ceasefire/Cure Violence is one of the greatest organizations in the city of Chicago. They are one of the many organizations that are brave enough to face the citywide violence. Visit their website at www.cureviolence.com.

Written by Amani and Jamari

“If we can convince more and more people to properly re-understand violence as a disease, then we can treat it accordingly by stopping the epidemic, reversing it and curing it.”

Ruben Escobar

As a young teenage boy, Ruben Escobar has experienced the same problems as the children of Chicago have today. Now as an adult, Mr. Escobar now joined the Stop the Violence Movement Chicago and The Neighborhood Chapel. He has volunteered at Ceasefire to bring communities together and to be an inspirational person.



Written by: Chelsea , Vonsal , and Taylor

“Come as a community. Not as race, not just blacks, whites, or Hispanics”.

Living in a dangerous community, a child of a single mother, it was a struggle for Ruben Escobar. In his teenage years, he and his brother were a part of a gang. Ruben Escobar was tired of the gang violence, so he decided not to be a part of it anymore. He did not want to put his family in danger any longer, so he got out of the gang violence, but his brother decided to stay. Ruben Escobar chose to work in the Humboldt Park community long before he volunteered at Ceasefire to help young kids get off the street and also make communities come together. He also tried to help his brother get out of the gang activity, but his brother was too stubborn and didn't listen. During his brother's time of gang activities, Ruben Escobar's brother was paralyzed from a gunshot.

Ruben Escobar changed his life around and started to join groups such as, Stop the Violence Movement: Chicago, The Neighborhood Chapel, and he volunteered at Ceasefire as an ex

gang member to talk to younger gang members about changing their life around. In the Humboldt Park area, Ruben and Ceasefire had experienced a drop in gun violence as he volunteered there. Along with working with gangs, Ruben and Ceasefire have provided programs for the children and young adults within the neighborhood. Ruben Escobar also wanted to change his life around because he wanted to protect his family, especially, his four children. He wanted to protect his children because he wants them to grow up in a safer environment and a better community. Ruben Escobar feels that he is changing for the greater good.

We think that Ruben Escobar is a great leader and has compassion, and integrity. He cares for others, and tries his best to help other communities grow. Ruben has done a lot in his lifetime and is still striving to do more.

Rabbi Joshua Salter

After leaving his job in wealth management for 17 years, Rabbi Joshua Salter decided it was time to make a change for our youth. Now, as a Program Manager for the southwest Ceasefire site, Rabbi Salter has been trying hard to make peace in Chicago communities.



Written by: Brinee , Makiyah , and Kayona

As a banker in wealth management, Rabbi Salter was a successful African American in his profession. Growing up with parents who were social activists in the 1960s and 70s, Rabbi Salter saw what making change was all about. While watching television one day he was disturbed by the gun violence towards African American youth.

As a result, he wanted to make a change to help out. "I left my cushy job to go and do

**"Human value is priceless.
We need to value each other's
lives."**

something socially conscientious to help our youth," he said. Now he works with Cure Violence to help reduce the violence in the communities.

Rabbi Salter has been working with Cure Violence since 2006. He was a program manger for the Southwest Organize Project. They help reduce the violence on Chicago streets and help build relationships between people. They give gang members different alternatives to being on the streets. By working with these organizations, Rabbi Salter has

made a big impact on the community.

In his many jobs with Cure Violence, Rabbi Salter also helps out with the interventions. Interventions are when people talk about their issues they are having and set goals to try to improve on their problems. 15 young men and women are the people who need the interventions for their issues. When

doing these interventions they let the outreach workers mentor the men and women because

they have been through these issues before such as being in gangs. They provide interventions for gang members too. They talk about their problems and their experiences they have been through.

We appreciate Rabbi Salter for what he has done for our community. The impact he has made is priceless. He has taught us if we want peace we have to give peace and to keep doing what we are doing to stop the gun violence. He is a strong man and a strong leader for the people of Chicago.

Marilyn Pitchford



Marilyn Pitchford is a strong, intelligent, African American woman fighting to stop the spread of violence in the West Humboldt Park Community. After her brother passed away, she was motivated to reach out and get more involved in her community to prevent gun violence.

Written by: Terrence , Genesis , and Angel

Having a family member shot once is devastating, but having a family member shot 3 times in 6 years is a traumatic experience. As a young adult growing up, Marilyn Pitchford witnessed her brother shot 3 times between the years 1993-1999. In August of 1999, her brother was gunned down and killed. Despite this tragedy, she decided to stop the violence from happening to someone else by joining Ceasefire.

When she joined Ceasefire in the year of 2000, Marilyn joined as a Ceasefire outreach. Then, in the year of 2008, she became the supervisor outreach, reaching out to people and offering her help while also training and supporting other outreachers.

Marilyn Pitchford used to work with another non-profit organization called Spitfire. Spitfire is an organization that tries to help young people get out of the cycle of violence by using music to stop gang activity.

Spitfire pairs up young musicians with professional producers who help record songs and videos. Spitfire is a good organization that helps young people get out of gang activity and make them realize that they still have other opportunities to change their lives and get off the streets.

Eric Brown, a.k.a Young DBoy Low is a former member of Spitfire. He was shot numerous times and beaten up. He used to rap about violence and gang activity, but now he helps the community to help prevent violence and gang activity with music.

“See, you can try to erase your own past, but you can’t erase the pain someone else has suffered due to the hands of your gang sign,” DBoy said. Thanks to Marilyn Pitchford she has reached out to so many of our youth. Marilyn taught us that even if something traumatic happens in your life, you could do something to help your community become better. GET INVOLVED!

**“We need to find
different ways to solve
our conflicts.”**

Patrick Holloway

Derrick House

The topic of gun violence sparked anger and frustration in the eyes of two Ceasefire members, Derrick House and Patrick Holloway.



Written by: Kameron , Adyria , and Byron

“Don’t let someone make a decision that will impact your life.”

Two Ceasefire members. One problem. People all over the world hear about innocent lives being taken away by gun violence. To these two Ceasefire members it shouldn’t happen again. To stop this problem it will take hard work, bravery, and a neighborhood.

Derrick House and Patrick Holloway became two amazing Ceasefire members. Derrick House liked what the community was doing with the programs to get teens off the street. He wanted to help. He became an Outreach worker, which means he works with young adults ages 16-25 by talking to them about their problems. Patrick Holloway wanted to be a part of a change in his community. He decided to work for Ceasefire to make the community better by breaking up fights in the community to stop the violence.

Derrick and Patrick have been working for Ceasefire for a long time. They know how violence really is in Chicago. Derrick House knows what to do to respond to violence. Derrick is a visible presence to stop violence and helps teens do the same with Ceasefire. Derrick has been working with Ceasefire for four years and he wants teens to go to school and join programs for a better future. Patrick has been working with Ceasefire for 9 years and he has been a good help with Derrick and we are grateful to have BOTH helping in our community.

Derrick House and Patrick Holloway are still standing today. Instead of being scared to stand up, they showed courage by working to make a powerful change in the community. We are encouraged to join them to make a decision that will positively impact on our lives.

Ameena Matthews

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Ameena Matthews's grandmother worked 3 jobs and still could not make ends meet for her and her family. According to Ameena, they were below the poverty line. This caused her to hustle to help her grandmother.



Written by: Carrie , Daniel , and Dequarion

“If I’m going to do the crime, I’m going to stand up like a soldier and do the time”

Ameena’s father was Jeff Fort. He was the gang leader of the Black P. Stones. He was convicted in 1987 for performing acts of domestic terrorism. Following in her father’s footsteps, Ameena hustled as well. However, when Ameena’s first child was born, she knew she had to do something to change her life for her child. She thought about her relationship with her father and how she had been visiting him in jail for 20 plus years. She realized that she didn’t want what happened to her father to happen to her. She didn’t want her son to have to visit her in jail like she was doing with her father. Ameena said, “Once I had my son I realized that it wasn’t about me anymore. It was about my family.”

Ameena did 6 months of volunteer work for Ceasefire. After those 6 months, Ceasefire offered her a job to stop the violence in her community. Since then she has worked with Ceasefire for a little under 7 years. She is a Senior Interrupter, one of the highest ranks in Ceasefire. Her job is to interrupt the transmission of violence from one person to another and stop a problem from escalating to a homicide. In order to do her job she

has to come face to face with the violence, and try to stop the violence at its source. She serves as a counselor on the streets and works not just for gang members, but also for everyone in her community. She is working to get the residents’ attention so that they will know that we need them to help resolve problems.

Ameena said, “I want my leaders to stand up and communicate and not just stay in cliques cause we need each other.” Ameena’s experiences made her the woman that she is today. Her experience also makes her the best at what she does. She knows what these teens are thinking and how to communicate with them in order to stop the violence in her community and life. Ameena is a strong and independent woman. She is an inspiration to anyone willing to listen to her. Sometimes, if they are not willing to listen, she makes them listen anyway because she knows she can help them change their life for the better. Ameena won the 2012 Dr. Betty Shabazz award for being dedicated in helping others in need. Thank you Ameena for all you do and continue to do for your community.

West Humboldt Park

Development Council

The West Humboldt Park Development Council is an organization formed in January of 1992. Over the years they have lent a hand to the West Humboldt Park residents. Doing their part to make a change in this Chicago area.

Imagine having a group of successful individuals that are willing to help and change your life and community when it's not doing so well. The West Humboldt Park Development Council's vision is to promote and improve the quality of life for the people and businesses in our community. They also help support more safety in our neighborhood and more programs in the community for young people.

The West Humboldt Park Development Council has different programs like kickboxing, hip-hop aerobics, kemetica yoga, step classes, and Pilates classes. All of these programs are to get young adults and teenagers off the streets. These programs are open to any one who wants to join and get off the street to change their life. This is a good way for teens to positively express themselves, because there is no violence in these activities teens can just be themselves.

The West Humboldt Park Development Council's mission is to reduce violence in this part of the community as well as to give advice on how to make the world better as a whole. They also are fighting to get community members of the West Humboldt Park area to connect with each other instead of being violent towards one another. The West Humboldt Park Development Council has been giving a helping hand since 1992, and will continue one step at a time.

Last, but not least, the West Humboldt Development Council is hoping to fill in every house and move the violence out of communities. The way filling every house will help reduce violence is because if they have a place to stay they will have no reason to be on the street. They are also hoping to improve the lifestyle for others as well as teach life long lessons as they go.

Written by: Keihara Brianna and De'Angelo

“The West Humboldt Park Development Council’s mission is to work collaboratively to develop, implement, and sustain processes that improve the quality of life for people, families, and businesses in the West Humboldt Park community.”



Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr.

Growing up as a child, Alderman Burnett's father worked as the assistant precinct captain who often took him to work. Alderman Burnett is currently in his 4th term as the 27th Ward alderman. He was motivated to become our alderman because he saw this ward as a challenge and he was ready to overcome it. This action ultimately led him to have the political career that he has today. It has also made him very dedicated to his work.

Written by: Ivory

Timmithy

and Jaqueze

“My dream is that all of you, the next generation in our society, will be the ones to turn this community around.”

Alderman Burnett became alderman at the age of 31 in 1995, making him the youngest alderman in the history of the City Council. He has worked with the West Humboldt Park community for a little over 18 years. This is the only community in his ward that he has met with once a month for 18 years. Even while being a full time alderman, he went back to school for his bachelor's degree at Northeastern Illinois University. As difficult as this was to serve as alderman while attending school, he managed to accomplish juggling both jobs. He is married to Darlena Williams- Burnett with 2 sons, Walter Redmond and Jawaharlal "Omar" Williams.

Also, at the mere age of 17, Alderman Burnett worked at a bank as a janitor. One Friday after payday he and an older gentleman who happened to be his co-worker went out for drinks. They drove to Kankakee because his co-worker said that he had to cash his check. Instead the coworker ended up robbing the bank and leaving with \$3,000. He instructed Burnett to drive away. They switched cars. Burnett remembers thinking, "My parents are going to be disappointed. I messed up my life." The police eventually caught them and one of the police officers wrote a letter to the governor that said that Burnett was a good kid, even in this situation. He pleaded guilty to armed robbery and served 2 years in jail. By the time he was paroled after 2 years and 3 months he had his

Associate's Degree in Political Science. As you can see Burnett has had some problems in his life, but he didn't let that stop him from becoming the man he is today.

Walter Burnett believes after school programs and other activities will help the community's gun violence problem. Also, he believes that having jobs for adults and job training for teenagers will decrease the number of teens on the streets and give them something positive to do. He wants to build pocket parks throughout the West Humboldt Park community. He also wants places built like the YMCA for activities and a place to go after school. Alderman Burnett is calling the youth and teens to action. He wants us to tell others to put down their guns so they don't get in trouble or hurt anyone. He wants to make kids aware of the laws in school so they don't think because they are minors they can't serve time in jail. He believes jobs are the key to solving the gun violence in this community.

Today Alderman Burnett wants to bring jobs, economic development to the community, and wants to get rid of vacant lots. He also believes that the next generation will be the ones to change this community. But, we have to take a stand against gun violence and bring peace to our community. This is where we come in. We have to be willing to help change our community. The 7th graders at Polaris and Alderman Burnett are. Are you?

Isaiah Ross



Isaiah Ross grew up around a lot of violence in his community, which is Englewood. Eventually, he ended up working with the West Humboldt Park Development Center to try to make a change in our community.

Written by: Deshyria Fre'quon, and
Rynasha

Isaiah got to witness firsthand what it meant to grow up in a community that faces issues like health, safety, and housing. He didn't want to be involved in gun violence, so he decided to move to West Humboldt Park to make a change. He attended the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign, and received his Bachelor's Degree in Landscape Architecture. He worked for 2 years throughout the Chicago area, and after that he went back to school to receive his Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning. After that, he traveled to Nairobi Kenya, and Mombasa Kenya. He volunteered in a community-based organization to address food insecurity.

Isaiah works for the West Humboldt Park Development Council, and so far he has worked with them for a year.

Some of his projects included helping families by keeping their homes from foreclosure and encouraging families to eat healthy because he really believes in proper nutrition. He also works with the Neighborhood Housing Service (NHS), and this is also an organization to keep families eating healthy foods. Isaiah knew that the West Humboldt Park community has the greatest diabetes rate in the nation, so he took his time out to decrease that by introducing new restaurants such as the Turkey Chop.

Working tirelessly for his community, Isaiah Ross is a caring and very helpful man. Even though he grew up around violence, he knew not to be overcome by it. He is truly a West Humboldt Park peacekeeper.

“You can't address the issue, unless you're able to talk about it.”

John Groene



Many people want to help the world. John Groene is one of those extraordinary people. He decided to work in South America for several years and there was progress from him helping and doing his job, after that he decided to come to Chicago and finish what he did in South America because there was a struggle and here are some of the things he did, to help the WHP community. He also did job training program in South America to help people get jobs.

Written by: Jonathan _____, Corinthian _____, and
Chrislon _____

John did job training program in South America to help people get jobs. He worked at a program named Neighborhood Housing Services {NHS}, which helps people buy and maintain houses. This program benefits people in a lot of ways. They saved 24 houses from foreclosure, which helps the community and the city. He also helps the community look better by boarding up houses and painting over windows to make them presentable.

John Groene helps organize Sweep and Greets in the WHP

community. He does that so that everybody keeps peace in the community and communicates with each other so that there will not be any violence on the block. It encourages more people to be outside which helps deter drug dealers and violence.

He also organizes Sweep And Greets to give back to the community and to be a role model. John Groene came to Polaris to give us feedback and advice on management for housing, how to spend money, and

how not to borrow money from currency exchanges because they are not as good a deal as people think. He told Polaris 7th graders “Don’t let anyone tell you what to do with your money. Let you tell yourself.”

John Groene worked with the care program and went to South America to help promote jobs and a better living. When he returned to America to help Chicago, he just didn’t work to help families from

“Connect people to an organization so they get off the streets and find jobs.”

foreclosure. He also helped get jobs and teach job training. Also he works in Chicago

Commons Adult Training Center to help families find jobs and train people for jobs. Because of his work he benefits our community by helping young people stay off the street.

John Groene is a person who cares about the world and not just his city or community. He proves that he’s a person that cares about his world, his city and community. This shows that he is a person that wants to take action. He has taught us that there are many ways to stop the violence.

Captain Roger Bay



Captain Roger Bay is a strong police officer trying to stop gun violence in the 11th district community. Captain Bay doesn't only look to the police, but he looks to the community to solve the gun violence problems.

Written by: Julian , Dewon , and Demetris

“You can’t just arrest. You have to change the environment.”

Captain Bay began as a police officer for eight years. He made good arrests and he put offenders away for a long time. He went to serve as a sergeant, where he supports police officers. Now as a captain, he shares information, so that officers on the beat know who is wanted. He not only works with officers but he also works with the community, and with teachers to improve conditions along Chicago Avenue. His work is mostly information sharing.

A while ago, Captain Bay recalls a good example of the community working to make a change. There was a liquor store where gang members used to hang out. The community got tired of it so the community came together to vote that a business could not hold a liquor license in that precinct. Due to this action, the liquor store had to close, and the gang members left. As Captain Bay said, “Sometimes the problems can be handled better by

the community than the police. All the police can do is arrest.” The community can create real change.

Captain Bay also believes that programs can be a better way to get people off the street. Some programs are re-entry programs, half way houses, and anger management. He said, “Where parents don’t step up, that’s where community organizations step in” meaning the community helps parents with their children if they need any type of help with them.

Captain Bay also believes we as the community can help the police with gang members and getting them off the corners. We personally agree with him because we can vote so there are some things that we can do that the police can’t. They can only arrest, but with the community’s help they can get more done.

Latasha Melton



Latasha Melton is a huge upstander with a kind heart. She can give you advice on how to change your community. Wisdom will come to you, just by listening to what she says.

Written by: Rose , Claudia and Zy'Mari

“People are not taking time out of their so-called busy schedules to talk to the youth”

Can you imagine seeing your relative getting shot on the corner or porch? This tragedy happened to Latasha Melton when her cousin was killed in 2011 from gun violence. This changed her life. People can get motivated easily because when a situation happens people like Latasha take a stand. Latasha didn't start actively working with Forever Inspired, until she did a non for profit organization, so it's hard to get people to trust her, and help her raise money because just does it from her heart.

“People in the community don't care about the youth,” Latasha said. She believes adults can make a change in their lives, if they had more social things that allowed them to express themselves like positive social clubs or ways that they could interact with others youths that wouldn't cause them to be without any supervision or would

help them a lot with being able to got the message out.

“They would have some guidance and someone they could trust”.

Latasha Melton says that the community needs to give back to the youth. She's also believes that children need to go to college, so they can have a better future. Also they can come and give back to their community so it can be a better place.

As a person she does parades in memory for people who died so other can get inspired to make a change and no longer have parades in memory but in celebration. She also adopted a family and gave them food and gave them gifts at Christmas, she said “There need to be more social things for the youth”.

Also, to be able to move forward and don't look back at your path and like Latasha Melton said, “Give back to your community and the youth.”

Community Activists

Across Chicago

Janette Wilson

Imagine having to deal with violence everyday as your job. Janette Wilson is a brave, strong, and bold person who is a well-known peacekeeper in Chicago. She is taking a stand with others to stop violence in our community.



Written by: Desiree , Adrian , and Angela

“Everybody came from a dysfunctional home. Rise up. Don’t let it hold you down. There is a god.”

This is an inspirational quote said by Janette Wilson. It speaks out and means it's not worth paying attention to the negativity in your life growing up. You can do better. You shouldn't let the bad things and family situations make you follow a violent path. It's your responsibility to change your actions and do well. This is the important message Rev. Wilson is trying to share with the community.

Rev. Wilson is an African American woman who is very selfless, and has risen from a dysfunctional home. She has made it her job to make the community a better place and make the people better people. There is no way something bad or wrong can get passed her. She is what we call an upstander; an upstander doesn't just sit back and watch something negative happen. An upstander does something to prevent and stop it from happening. Her work has been successful, helpful, and effective.

As a teenager, Janette Wilson has been through rough times herself, not being able to have necessities. Rev. Wilson said growing up she had no positive and successful mentors to look up to. She believes children should have a mentor, one who succeeded and will lead them to what is right. Not having a mentor can possibly mean falling into the cycle of gun violence because it will be hard to resist going into the hands of violence itself. She has personally affected us by helping us change the way we think. She encouraged us to believe in ourselves. The youth has to keep striving without giving up and letting things hold them back. She has explained to the 7th graders in Polaris that, "Life isn't what has been done, but what you decide to be and do."

Her passion for making things better and for not letting communities fall apart is so motivating. For example, from her experience with lawyers she wasn't so pleased by the way her family was treated. So what did Janette do? She took it upon herself to make things right, so she became a lawyer. She would never disrespect anyone as a lawyer; plus she loved the feeling of helping out innocent victims. But what got to her was having to defend offenders. One case that touched her and affected her emotionally, involved 5-year-old child abused. There was no way she could defend offenders. From then on she decided being a lawyer didn't fit her. Sure she defended good people, and she loved that part. The part she didn't like was defending offenders. So she had to find a different way to help good people, victims, or offenders, before they go to court.

She does some work being a senior advisor for Jessie Jackson, who is a peacekeeper himself. Jessie Jackson does his own work with trying to stop violence so Rev. Wilson wanted to be a part of that. She now works with Push For Excellence as executive director. She works with student educators to challenge students and their parents to push for excellence. Through her work trying to conquer violence in the community she had to overcome a lot of challenges including racism, sexism, and poverty. Even with those challenges she made it through with a positive attitude. Because of that, she stands as a strong person today.

Having a rough path, Janette Wilson has succeeded and is still striving for better and more, not just for herself but for others as well. She has faith that the next generation (kids and teens) can be the ones that make a difference.



Pastor Pedro Windsor

There are many people who qualify as a community leader. But not all of them are recognized. So here is one that has been very supportive by being a leader for the community. He goes by the name of Pastor Windsor who mentors young teenagers to have a better future.

Written by: Anna _____, Keyana _____, and
Beauty _____

Pastor Windsor is a strong, selfless, determined, and brave person. He sets goals for young teenagers who are in gangs or do not have productive things to do. Pastor Windsor has four kids who also have grown up in the community in gun violence. Since he has four kids who grew up with gun violence, he figured that it was his responsibility to take a stand and resolve this problem.

Pastor Windsor supports the Ceasefire as one

of his call to actions. He also mentors young adults into becoming leaders who will do well in their community. This is what he loves and feels called to do.

Pastor Windsor is not only a pastor, but he is a peacekeeper who is trying to stop gun violence. With there being lots kids in the community this means they need to be safe and be able to grow up in a safe community .To do that he has to find a village that has the same mission as he does he speaks metaphorically about people

around us. “Gun violence needs to stop, that’s the goal. But this requires everyone coming together”, Pastor Windsor said.

If everyone believes in preventing gun violence or any kind of violence, that will make a difference in our community. He agrees that many teens want mentoring and guidance because they are trying to improve their

“Your life is my life. It doesn’t matter how we got here. What matters is that we’re here.”

surroundings to have a better life for them and others. Pastor Windsor also believes that stores that sell guns need to do better background checks because people have easy ways to get guns. “Sometimes they don’t even check for IDs,” Pastor Windsor said.

Pastor Windsor is one of the greatest peacekeepers. He does not only promote peace in his community, but he supports young people to make the right choices, and to go in the right path. We honor his presence in being a mentor for those who need it. We thank him for all the work he has done for us.

Myrta Cruz



Myrta Cruz has been through tragedies and tough obstacles, but through it all, she remained strong and still managed to give back to the community. She's been on this roller coaster of happiness, despair, hope, and pain, but when she got off the ride she became the strong, courageous, brave, and compassionate woman that she is today.

Written by: Trinity

Vanita

and Ameerah

Myrta Cruz is no stranger to life's challenges. Not only has she suffered from the tragedies in her life, but she also suffered from cancer. Three years ago, she went through stage four cancer, and doctors told her that she had four to six months to live. "By the grace of god, I still stand today," she stated. Through all she has been through, she still managed to stay strong for not only herself but for her whole family. She still stays strong through all of the pain and crime from people dying because of gun violence. Myrta Cruz will forever and always stay the confident woman she is today.

No one ever wants to see their child shot and killed or on drugs, but Myrta Cruz had to go through all of the losses of loved ones to gun violence. Myrta had a son named Peter. Peter was shot and killed a day before his fifteenth birthday. He was an innocent victim and didn't have anything to do with the reason for his death. She also had a grandson named Max who was shot just last year in a tow truck at work. "This pain will never go away." Myrta Cruz said.

The tragedies that she's been through encouraged her to work with

an organization called Ceasefire. Ever since then she's been saving lives and being a part of the anti-violence movement. She is also a violence interrupter. As a violence interrupter, she participates in violence prevention programs. She tries to teach people on the street that there will always be a better life than a life of crime. She has learned that not everyone is going to listen and take her advice. She works to stay motivated in helping others.

Myrta Cruz believes that a positive change should always happen. We will always try to help others not just when a tragedy happens or

**“GANGS DON’T
LOSE MEMBERS.
FAMILIES DO.”**

another life is taken. She hopes that this violence will start decreasing and that we can make a brighter future for us and for the kids looking up to us. She believes that we have to come together and save our community. No mother wants to bury her child or see them go through the worst. "It's a mother's prayer." Myrta Cruz said. Just because we are getting better or making a slight change doesn't mean that we forget that the pain NEVER goes away. Let's piece the puzzle back together and make a change for the better.

Patrick Thompson

Patrick Thompson is a compassionate person and has the heart of an active citizen. He is a responsible and trustworthy person, who cares deeply about his community and how it affects us. He hopes to live in a world where there isn't any violence in the community.



Written by: Ariannie Makiah and
De' Ahvion

"The people need to stand up and let their voices be heard."

“It's up to you and your generation to say no,” says Patrick Thompson, a community activist who is involved with a lot of violence prevention. It took his friend to be a victim of gun violence to realize that the violence needs to stop. Patrick Thompson is involved with working with the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence (ICHV), an organization that helps the community members get their message out to different communities, especially to the youth. And what the ICHV does is they help advocate policies that can help decrease the violence in the community. They also help get the message out to the youth about alternatives in the neighborhood.

Patrick believes that we as a community need to be more involved. Patrick is also involved in a student voice campaign that helps young people to promote better communities. The student voices campaign is designed to get the youth thinking and speaking out about gun violence. The campaign helps provide an outlet so the youth can be heard about their opinions about gun

violence. This helps them know that the youth care about the violence and want to do something that can help. It also helps them turn their thoughts about violence into action, so they can become leaders and activists in their community. He encourages more role models to stand up so others have people they can look up to. He wants the youth to know that standing on the corner and selling drugs leads to an unhealthy lifestyle, but that standing up for what you believe in and what's right, leads to a better and brighter future.

Patrick Thompson is still trying to get his core message out: to get people together and to be involved to stop gun violence. It takes a brave person and a strong generous heart to stand up to something they believe isn't right. You are here to live, not to die. Be a hero and try to save your kind. If we don't stand up and try to make our community better and more presentable, our community will not improve. It will do the exact opposite of improve. As Patrick said, "Gun violence affects all of us."

Bryant Cross



Written by: Ameerah

“Any act towards peace is an act of faith”

Bryant Cross is a strong independent man. He has a very bright personality. Bryant has lost loved ones ever since he was younger. So he knows exactly how the families to the victims of gun violence feel. Unlike other people whenever he lost someone he loved, he didn't go out and do something that could affect everyone in a bad way. He didn't just give up hope and lost complete faith in him self and his community. Instead he started helping his community and others to get through this epidemic of gun violence .He helps people realize that seeking revenge on the ones that has hurt you just so you can hurt them, just so you can make them feel that pain that you went through, isn't worth your time. That the best revenge that you can get on another person, is SUCCESS. Success on bringing your community together, success in helping decrease the pain that

gun violence brings into families, success in getting teens off of the streets and in school, and success in getting people jobs. He has had to learn from his own mistakes and others and it surely was not easy but he knew that he had no choice but to in order to give back to the community.

Bryant is the manager of the 500campaign, witch is what seventh graders joined in on for our project. He is also a poet, all of his poems have something to do with life it's self. When Bryant came by our school he taught us the value of poetry and how you can get out everything through writing, it made us realize how powerful our book could be and (if we put our hearts in it) how much we could help change the future for not only us but our whole community. Bryant Cross has not only open young adults eyes but also different communities. He's a true role model.

Polaris Charter Academy

Peacekeepers

We were learning about the 2nd Amendment, which is the right to bear arms. While doing this study Sandy Hook, Hadiya Pendleton, and 6-month-old Jonlyah Watkins died due to gun violence. These deaths really sparked our drive to start this project because we noticed that not only them, but also innocent people are dying all over the world due to gun violence. Since, starting this project the 7th graders have tried to bring peace to our school and our community. We have gone to community meetings to show our community that we care and they should join in with us. We got together with Bryant Cross who came all the way from Tampa Bay, Florida to help us plan a day of peace. He taught us that the meaning of community is “what happens to you, happens to me” and everyone in the community should have that kind of dedication to each other. We met with Alderman Burnett multiple times to share our project with him, get him to participate in our project, and to get him to spread the word so, more people will join and he was able to do that for us. We want our project to go global not for the reason of fame, but for the fact that the gun violence NEEDS to STOP and that’s what we’re here to do. Are you?



Beauty



Rose



Ivory *



Taylor *



Genesis



Rynesha



Adrian Moore



Chrishon *



Dewon



Ariannie Foster



Daniel



Timmityh



Trinity



Amani



Byron



Jamari

**MY SUPER POWER TO
CHANGE THE WORLD.**

By Jaqueze

If I had the superpower
To freeze time
I would
Take all of the guns
Away from people that are
Not using them the correct way.

I would also have the power
To freeze time to stop a moving
BULLET
FROM HITTING
AN
INOCIENT
PERSON.

If I could freeze time,
I would use it to get someone out
Of a dangerous.
Situation.

Are We Lost?

By Ariannie

When I look in the mirror is see the word
Lost.

I feel like our community is locked up
and full of doubt.

We are starting to fail.

Did that ever pop up in your head?
Because it should start to ring a bell.

We continue to dishonor people
and act like we just don't care,
but when I think about what we are,

I would say lost.

And in the inside it makes me scream
and shout.

Then I think, *Am I the one who should
stand up?*

because without a leader its like we
remain stumped.

But, why should I stand up for something

I didn't start?

Then try to convince myself that
in violence we all play a part.

I think again as the thoughts in my head
begin to spin.

Ahy only me what about everyone else?

Then a voice in my head begins to speak
out

*Because this a problem that is including
yourself!*

And if we don't try to and stand up now,
we wouldn't be making our world a
better place.

Do you really want to see your world
come down
right in front of your face?

The Other Day I Looked Into The Mirror...

By: Keihara

The other day, I looked into the mirror and saw the word HELP!

Why does the world leave a burden on me?

Bringing me tension, pain, and fear.

Fear that you may see me today
and *like that* I may be gone tomorrow,

Vanished off earth

and soon to become just a name.

Not known as a person

because I'm gone.

It's funny how I would be gone from

a world where I deserved to live,

but your still there.

Bringing hate, violence, and sorrow.

The next gun violence victim could be

my mom, my dad, or even worst

one of my younger brothers.

They say Forgive but never

Forget.

How can I forgive when you

took away my or a love one's

Life,

Leaving the family in despair.

To you your goal is to kill so

You feel superior

But you're not noticing that

one man's "trash" is another

man's "treasure."

I believe in second

chances but I don't

believe everyone

deserves a second chance.

If you want to change,

I won't stop you.

If you feel the need to stop

Change.

Just know I will help you to choose

the path to a better life.



Fre'quon *



Vanita



Makiah



Adyria



Makiyah



De'Ahvion



Carrie



Brinee *



Chelsea



Kameron *



Kayona



Terrence



Dequarion



Angel



Jonathan



Demetris

DANGEROUS

By Beauty

The other day, I looked
into the mirror and saw
the word DANGEROUS
appearing
on the mirror through fog.

As a young person I'm
living in a world with
hate, fear, and sadness.

This big town Chicago is
DANGEROUS for young souls
to be in.

It's too big for these young
souls to see in.

Kids play with their
friends and see violent
things going around,
don't know what to do
when they see violence in there
eyes.

The other day I looked
into the mirror and saw
the word DANGEROUS
appearing
on the mirror through fog.

How can I stop the word
DANGEROUS from appearing
through fog?

Hope

By Anna

When I looked in the mirror I saw
the word hope,
it was clear
and I knew what the word was
meant to do.

It was a reminder of the past,
present and maybe the future.
Chicago is a city and that's all it is,
it the people who give it a
meaning.

Hope is the frosting on the
cupcake
and the cupcake is Chicago.

Without that frosting
the cupcake is dry and just not the
same.

Hope is the people wanting more
for themselves.

But you can't get an orange
if you don't ever plant the seed
that makes the tree.

Will I Make It?

By Daniel

Will I make it in life?

Will I make it?

Will I just die out in the middle
of the street, with no purpose at
all?

Will I make as a teenager?

Will I make to the age of 22,
will I make it to 50,

Will I make it?

Will I make to high school or
college?

Will I make it through love,
will I be able to be a father and
have a generation of my own,
with the love of my life?

Will I make it?

Will I follow the right path or
the wrong path?

Will I make it?

In order for me to follow the
right path I have to leave a
better path for myself, because
when its time to put my keys
into the ignition of life, it will
be a steady road for me to just
drive on.

I have the power to make a
steady road for myself.

And so do you.

I can make it.

You can make it.

Believe

By Trinity

I have the power to *believe*

and with that I will change Chicago.

We have painted the picture that feelings
are denied

and that we have to hide

the pain inside in order to make this world
just right.

My brother, my sister, know that I won't
judge you.

Not even the real you.

I care too much to let you fail

so it's my fault, for letting this picture be
painted so well.

You don't understand what you're doing.

I can't lose you like I lost my other brothers
from getting into it.

So let's stop this today

and believe that there will be a brighter
day.

So, put away that mask of your painful
past,

because if this is the picture I have to
frame and keep

then just throw it away because I won't let
this be.

So let's just believe that we can look each
other in the eyes and get rid of all that pain
inside.

I deserve to live and let our picture be
painted just right.

No rips, no tears, no dripping paint.

Let's *believe*.

I promise our lives will never be the same.



Corinthian



De' Angelo



Julian



Jaqueze



Angela



Claudia



Zy'Mari



Anna



Keihara



Keyana



Brianna



Ameerah *



Deshyria



Desiree *



Vonsal

*Denotes a
Project Manager
for this Project

George Westinghouse

College Prep

In addition to creating this book honoring Peacekeepers in our community. The 7th Graders at Polaris Charter Academy created Public Service Announcements asking everyone to join them in a Day of Peace!

Visit the following links to watch the Public Service Announcements:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1ZOBS5UdY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qtx4faNOkOs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgmBK2RGVVE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3XsGps8U4A>

You can also find the videos by typing *peacekeepers7* in the YouTube search bar.

These Public Service Announcements were made possible with the help of the seniors in the Broadcast Class at George Westinghouse College Prep. They joined us in our efforts to stop the violence by leading their expertise in filming and editing.

No shootings, no killings, no violence!











Thank you, Westinghouse High School Broadcast Class
Seniors for all your help in filming and editing our
Peacekeeper Public Service Announcements.

Demetree	Jasmine
Ragene	Amari
Lanyah	Tatyana
Tobias	Timothy
Quyanna	Shemari
Tammisha	Jeter
Tywaun	DaMari
Tanika	Myliah
Brittney	Markia
Virginia	Nicole
Desiree	Chishonda
Lovely	Imani
Lucero	Rikita
DeAngelo	Dedrianna
Chacuntay	Latasha
Corbin	Lataysia
Amanda	Drakyla
Guadalupe	Gerek
Monterria	
Jasmine	

Call-to-Action

Through community partnerships, Polaris Charter Academy 7th grade students discovered the power of active citizenship, and how creative arts can influence the public and make social commentary. As stewards of peace, we created four Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos. Our PSAs compel the citizens of Chicago to participate in a "Day of Peace" on Monday, June 10th. Our PSAs also communicate the need for more alternatives to gun and gang violence. On our *Day of Peace* we will ask that community members to rally together for 24 hours of no violence. In addition, students planned a *Peace Fest* event where Chicago citizens get to know their neighbors and celebrate the culture and pride of their neighborhood blocks while learning about neighborhood organizations and programs available to youth and teens. Our ultimate goal is to pass our Day of Peace resolution in Chicago's City Council, making it an official city ordinance.

For more information go to <http://www.pcachicago.org>

Click on the 7th Grade tab

Special Thanks

A special thanks goes out to all our experts who helped make our Public Service Announcements and book possible. We appreciate your belief in us; that young people do have power and a voice in making their community stronger.

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