

I WANT TO KNOW WHY



An Anthology of Sixth-and Seventh-grade Student Writing
X287— The Forward School
Bronx, New York
David Surface & Amina Henry, Writers-in-residence
Spring 2016
Teachers & Writers Collaborative

I WANT TO KNOW WHY

An Anthology of Sixth-and Seventh-grade Student Writing
X287— The Forward School
Bronx, New York
Magdalen Neyra, Principal
Lisa Seabrooks, Assistant Principal
David Surface & Amina Henry, Writers-in-residence
Spring 2016
Teachers & Writers Collaborative

Table of Contents

Foreword	p. 5
I Kill, <i>Clara Martinez</i>	p. 7
Lockdown, <i>Ckarisma Brown</i>	p. 9
I See a Little Boy Holding a Gun, <i>Gabriella Nunez</i>	p. 11
I Need To Survive, <i>Ckarizma Brown</i>	p.13
The Gamer, <i>Clara Martinez</i>	p. 15
My Baby, <i>Mariah Henriques-Townsend</i>	p. 17
The World Is Too Much, <i>Clara Martinez</i>	p. 19
People Make Me Kill, <i>Ashley Holden</i>	p. 21
I Want To Know Why, <i>Group Poem</i>	p. 23



Foreword

Welcome to *I Want To Know Why*, an anthology of student writing from the Forward School in the Bronx. This anthology is the result of a special ten-week program, the *Anti-Gun Violence Initiative: Art a Catalyst for Change*, sponsored by New York City Council Member Laurie A. Cumbo.

For this special program, Teachers & Writers Collaborative has partnered with the Forward School and the Bronx Historical Society to provide young students with the opportunity to express themselves in creative and positive ways to counteract the effects of gun violence in their schools and neighborhoods.

Every year, over 17,000 children and teens in America become victims of gun violence. We believe that by pairing young people with professional teaching artists, nurturing their talent, and providing them with new and positive outlets of expression, we can help bring about a change and end gun violence in this country.

“Positive expression” does not mean ignoring the dark side—the stories and poems you will read in this anthology show a range of voices and viewpoints, some of them darker than others. It’s to these students’ credit that, through their writing, they are able to empathize with other people, even ones whose viewpoints they don’t necessarily share. Empathy leads to understanding, and understanding leads to change.

My thanks to Magdalen Neyra, principal of the Forward School, and Carla Rosada, Program Manager of Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation, for their positivity and support for this project. A special thanks to Massiel Lopez, After School Assistant Director for the Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation for her amazing help in bringing us together with the students and for making this program work.

My thanks also to Angel Hernandez, Education Coordinator of the Bronx Historical Society, and to Dimitris Raptopoulos, Director of Operations and Development for the Bronx Historical Society, for being such enthusiastic and supportive partners in this process.

Finally, a big thank you to the students of the Forward School for your willingness to explore a difficult topic with courage and creativity. This book is for you.

David Surface & Amina Henry
Writers-in-Residence
Teachers & Writers Collaborative



I Kill

I kill.
It's kind of my job.
Blood is a smell I have become numb to,
something I see every day.

I want to know why,
why they make me kill,
turn me into a murderer.
Gunshots,
a sound I'm deaf to.

What if I over-do it one day,
make it too hard to clean?
What if it becomes too much?
Is it bad that sometimes I dream
of being the nice guy?
You know,
like if it was someone else doing the dirty-work.

But I'm afraid it might be too late.

by Clara Martinez



Lockdown

So me and my whole school was in the lunch room playing and talking. Then the staff started looking suspicious, standing by the door, looking scared and confused. That's when the police officers started coming into the room, so when me and my friend started panicking and worrying, one of the staff told us to quiet down so he could make an announcement.

The Principal quieted everybody down, and she made an announcement that this was a REAL lock down, and she wanted us to be quiet and sit still. Then that's when me and my friends started praying and asking God if we were going to be okay. The staff came to my table and said, "Y'all will be okay."

So three minutes later, that's when we heard a loud BOOM, and me and my friends crawled under the table and started crying. That's when the police officers went to check the halls. Me and my friends were worried if they were going to be okay, because it was dangerous out there, and we thought that they were going to get hurt.

Ten minutes later they came back and said it was all clear, so we went to our next classes.

by Ckarizma Brown



I see a little boy holding a gun

I wonder
is this little boy
going to kill someone?

I think this little boy is angry
Why does this little boy have a gun?

This little boy wants to rob someone

The people are afraid of him

I hear shooting

I smell blood

by Gabriella Nunez



I Need To Survive

I see kids laying on the floor
I am really scared
I don't know what to do
I hope the police come soon

I hear gun shots in the hall
It's coming closer
I can smell gunpowder from the gun

I feel scared because I have never been in this situation before
this happened to my friend
and she didn't survive
I'm afraid of dying

I don't want to die and lose my life

I dream about having a great career
being a teacher
because I really love and care about my students
so I need to survive

I smell fear

by Ckarizma Brown



The Gamer

Another headshot...

YES!

I watch as blood and brains flow out of my friend's head...

Of course,

I didn't actually shoot him...

It's just a game,

Call of Duty, to be specific.

I have fifteen more of my friends to shoot to win.

I have to pee...I'm hungry...

But I can't lose.

People say "violent games are bad,"

but this is a job;

I could be a professional gamer

That would be a dream come true

YOU KNOW HOW MUCH CASH THEY MAKE?!?!?

I mean, you already know me...

I'd hit 'em wit the boom,

and then POOF, now you're dead

I'm so good, I'm sure I could make a living wit money and stuff

If I was to stop playing these games, I don't know what I would do...

I mean, I suck at the normal educational stuff

like math, ELA, science, etc.

But when it comes to video games...

I KICK SOME SERIOUS DONKEY KONG BUTT !!!

At the end of the day

it's not the kind of game you play

It's about what you are capable of accomplishing, because
of that game.

by Clara Martinez



My Baby

My name is Khalia and I have a baby
I know I might sound like any other woman with a child, but I'm very
different
and so is my baby
I only have to feed my baby once a week
My baby is always getting me in trouble
The police are always taking my baby away
and sending me behind bars
My baby never cries
she only makes loud *booms* once in a while
Most of the time when people see my baby and I
they run away and scream
but my baby screams louder
loud enough to make someone die

by Mariah Henriques-Townsend



The world is too much,
too cruel.
I don't get it.
What's the point of love,
if not everyone has it?
Sometimes I wish,
I wish people cared.
I wish people noticed.
I'm going through hell.
Do you ever get that?
The feeling, okay, forget life.
That's how I feel right now.

I dream of having a family that loves for me,
friends that would be there for me,
But I still question myself,
like, what if when I'm gone, they want to care?
What if there's someone that does care
but I just don't know it yet?

Am I ready for this?
Maybe.
Maybe not.
But I've dreamed this would come to an end
and I have decided
Today is that day.

by Clara Martinez



People Make Me Kill

People make me kill.

Killing is my life.

The blood is my best friend.

The way I do this is by not thinking.

I wonder

why and how I do it.

When I kill, it's just by shouting and not thinking.

I feel people should let me kill them

by Ashley Holden



I Want To Know Why

I see people lighting candles and singing songs
I hear sad music and crying
I smell flowers and candles burning

I feel angry, depressed, sad

I want this person to come back
I want them to come back
because they were close to me

I'm afraid
because maybe they might come after me
because they're mad that I know who they are

I want to know why they did this

I want to know why

Group poem