

Winning Entries – 2017 Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship  
“How would you solve the public health crisis of gun violence?”

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Keagan Rice, The Dalles High School

This public health crisis of gun violence touched our community a few weeks ago when a student from The Dalles High School ended his life with a gun. While I fully support the American Medical Association's policies around gun restrictions, I believe that focus is only a piece of the solution. I am a proponent of The Cure Violence Health Model, which according to their website, “uses the same three components that are used to reverse epidemic disease outbreaks. One being interrupting transmission of the disease, two being reducing the risk of the highest risk, and three being changing community norms.” <http://cureviolence.org/the-model/essential-elements/>

There is a culture of violence known to many Americans that someone like me can not fully understand because I'm protected by many privileges. Growing up surrounded by people who resolve conflict with their words, I learned those skills. As a future social worker, I may not be the best person to interrupt violence, but in my opinion, Violence Interrupters need to be able to come from the community and align with the people experiencing and spreading violence.

My contribution to the movement will be more behind the scenes, as a support to the front line folks. Those who work alongside individuals impacted by the public health epidemic of violence must assist people in developing a new set of non violent replacement behaviors. Well intended outsiders coming into a community and imposing education on people is not enough, that is a “top down approach.” Cure Violence is a “bottom up approach” that starts with the root of the issue and works up. This model works from the premise that violence is a contagion that relies on exposure, proximity, and vulnerability- it is a scientific approach to violence, which differs greatly from conventional wisdom and the dominant discourse that perpetuates the notion that bad people do bad things.

With that being said, The Cure Violence Health Model is how I would solve the public health crisis of gun violence. The model can be brought to The Dalles if someone champions the effort. A degree in social work/social justice will equip me to be that champion.