Just because ain''t nobody talking no more about violence don''t mean it ain''t happening, they say. After the crews carved out their turfs, after the Original Gangsta generation got killed or went to prison. After all the president's men and mayors preached about violence and the city got new police chief after chief. It don''t mean kids in this area are not still growing up scared, with shots ringing down their streets.

Their family and friends die so often they hit the mute button. Some kids have adapted, navigating their way like they''re walking on broken glass. Careful not to step on somebody's shoe, careful not to be with somebody's girl, careful not to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Careful and weary.

Some are silent in the face of it, walking around with images of violence fast-forwarding and rewinding in their minds. Pow. The blood. Somebody on the sidewalk.

Then there are some, like the members of a youth group called Revel Youth Shine, who are speaking out, singing out. They want the violence to end. They just released a CD called "RYS Above the Violence," a collection of spoken-word poetry, testimonials, rap and hip-hop --- all original material by young people in the Washington, D.C., area.

The first cut, "Revel Youth Party," is by Lavone Price, 15, and Joe Blak, a counselor who works with Revel Youth Shine.

Price said the inspiration came from the accumulation of things seen and unseen.

"I''ve been walking around the streets since I was 8 years old," he said. "I''ve seen people get shot, seen people get stabbed, seen people get kidnapped. I seen a man walking down the street and a van rolled up on him slowly and a man grabbed him and put a bag over his head and they drive off, and no telling what they did to him. This was close to darkness. This was in

my old neighborhood."

And he remembers the day he was at a park, and somebody called out somebody else's name. "He said, "You got my money from that stuff you sold for me?" The other guy was like, "No, give me another day." Then he just shot him. He shot him in the chest twice. And he just rode off. He died on the spot. That's when I was 9. I saw him pull out his gun, and I turned around and walked the other way. There was no telling where that bullet could have ricocheted and hit."

Price is hoping his song gets through to other people.

"They can party without having guns, alcohol and sexual activities. It don"t need to be violence at a party. If you have a problem with somebody, just address it with them. You can talk out the problem and talk it out and leave it alone after that."

Revel Youth Shine is a summer and after-school program sponsored by the D.C. government. Its creative director, Daren Ras"D Campbell, said its mission is to create safe havens for young people and teach them to make positive decisions in the midst of violence by making music, writing, acting and dance. Each summer, 20 area young people, ages 8 to 24, agree to take part in the eight-week program. In past years, they have created anthologies, songs and books to express their emotions about love, hate, war, peer pressure, confusion and peace. The students, who also get training in entrepreneurial skills, sell the works.

"It is utilizing the arts to heal hearts," Campbell said. "At the end of the eight weeks, the youth are corralled into a studio. They record a full-length CD in one day. They offer a platform to inspire their peers. They are transforming communities into more vibrant and self-confident communities. Even when times around them are bleak, with a heightened heart, these youth still are looking at the world with clean hearts and pure hands. There is no profanity."

The young people are taught how to increase their self-awareness and self-confidence. They are taught relaxation and breathing techniques and meditation. They learn to discuss what is going on in their communities. They free-write, and from this comes their music and spoken word.

"They are able to understand the anatomy of music as a frequency for energy," Campbell said. "That has been able to assist them in transforming anger into triumph, transform sadness into healing and into happiness."

Source