



**SHALA BLADE**

is a tenth grader at Glenville High School. She loves singing, music and reading and is currently learning to play guitar. When she is finished with school she would like to be a news anchor or a music producer.

I believe that hate is something that occurs everywhere. You see it in schools, restaurants, but more importantly in the streets. I've had the misfortune of seeing many families and parents mourn the losses of their loved ones due to street violence. Most of the victims haven't even had the privilege of seeing the age of twenty one and it sickens me and makes me wonder "How long do I have?" There were three acts of violence that changed my outlook on life and also made me want to make a difference in this world.

There was a young girl who lived on my street; she was murdered the summer of 2012. She was at a party laughing and enjoying herself when out of nowhere someone began shooting. She was shot and died soon after. This enraged me greatly but also saddened me because five days before she was murdered she celebrated her birthday. She didn't even have the chance to enjoy being fourteen. This caused me to learn to cherish each and every moment I have on this earth.

The second act of violence that hurt me was the murder of a three year old boy. Five days before the remains of this baby were found there was an Amber Alert issued and everyone was praying that he would soon be found. His body was found in garbage bags at a waste management recycling center. This sickened me because I have two nephews around this baby's age and I couldn't fathom the thought of them ever being harmed in any way. I thought to myself, "Who would do this to an innocent baby?" It was then that I knew that we needed to make a difference...and soon.

This last act hurt me as much as the case of the three year old. It was the murder of an 18 year old male. He was walking down the street when a car pulled up beside him and shot him. It hurts me even more because of the fact that he had two children. Now two babies would grow up without a father, not because he didn't want to be there for his children but because he had no choice.

All of these people have died senseless deaths that could have been prevented. One day people will get tired of the hatred that occurs and decide to take a stand. I am one of those people. Soon I plan to start an anti-gang and anti-gun violence program at my school helping people learn to make better decisions. Until then, I participate in a mediation program. In this program we help teens who have problems with others learn to work out their differences and talk about them rather than fighting or killing each other for petty reasons. I know it's not much but I think it applies to this when Neil Armstrong said "That's one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind".