

# YOUTH GUN VIOLENCE:

A COMMUNITY'S CALL FOR ACTION PROJECT

JANUARY-APRIL 2025

Location: Boys and Girls Club Kiwanis- Regent Park, Toronto.



## PROGRAM GOALS

- Empower youth to become community leaders.
- Provide practical conflict resolution skills to reduce violence.
- Raise awareness about gun violence prevention.
- Build a stronger, safer community through youth engagement.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

This project was a three-month youth empowerment program designed to address the root causes of gun violence among racialized youth in Toronto's Regent Park. The initiative offered leadership development, conflict resolution training, CPR and First aid certification, grief and mental health support, advocacy and community resource navigation.



## WHY THIS PROJECT MATTERS

On March 12, 2024, a heartbreaking tragedy occurred near Dunes and Parliament in Toronto. A family dispute ended in a fatal shooting of John Ngoyi Kongolo and Denzel Didier Kongolo, allegedly at the hands of 23-year-old Benedict Johnson Kongolo, with their mother critically injured. This event had shaken the Congolese Canadian community and highlighted the urgent need for proactive solutions to youth gun violence. This program was created in a direct response, an initiative for healing, empowerment, and transformation within the Regent Park neighbourhood.

# PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- **Leadership Development:** Workshops on personal growth, civic responsibility, and community mobilization.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Practical strategies to deescalate conflict and promote peaceful dialogue.
- **CPR & First Aid Certification:** Emergency response skills provided in partnership with local health professionals.
- **Grief Management & Mental Health:** Therapeutic workshops focused on trauma healing.
- **The Power of Awareness: Navigating Your Daily Environment:** Skills to enhance situational awareness and personal safety in everyday situations.
- **Community Voices: Advocating for Gun Violence:** Learn to become advocates for positive change and develop practical strategies for community engagement and advocacy.

## Conflict Resolution training

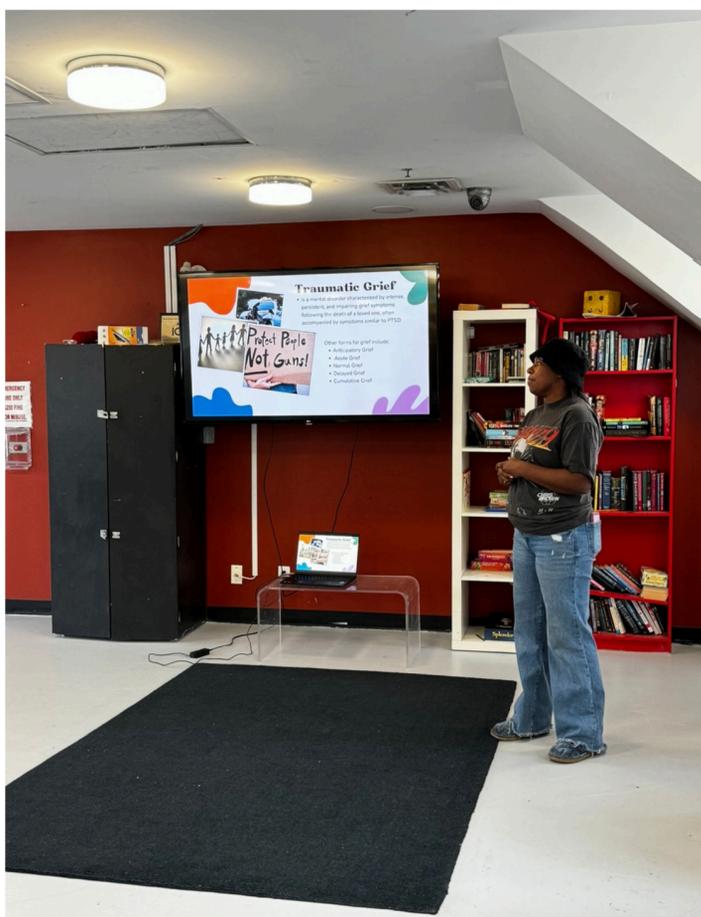


The objective of this workshop was to teach youth to reduce interpersonal conflict and prevent escalation. The youth learned verbal de-escalation strategies, empathy building communication tools and how to mediate disputes among peers.

**Impact:** Participants completed role-play exercises and 78% felt prepared to manage real life conflict situations.

## The Power of Awareness: Navigating Your Daily Environment

This workshop helped youth understand the importance of situational awareness in daily life, learn to identify potential threats and risk factors, develop practical safety habits and response strategies and practice through scenario-based exercises.



## CPR & First Aid Certification

Partnered with Heaven Can Wait to provide:

- Hands-on CPR practice
- Basic wound care and emergency response to choking, strokes and heart attacks.

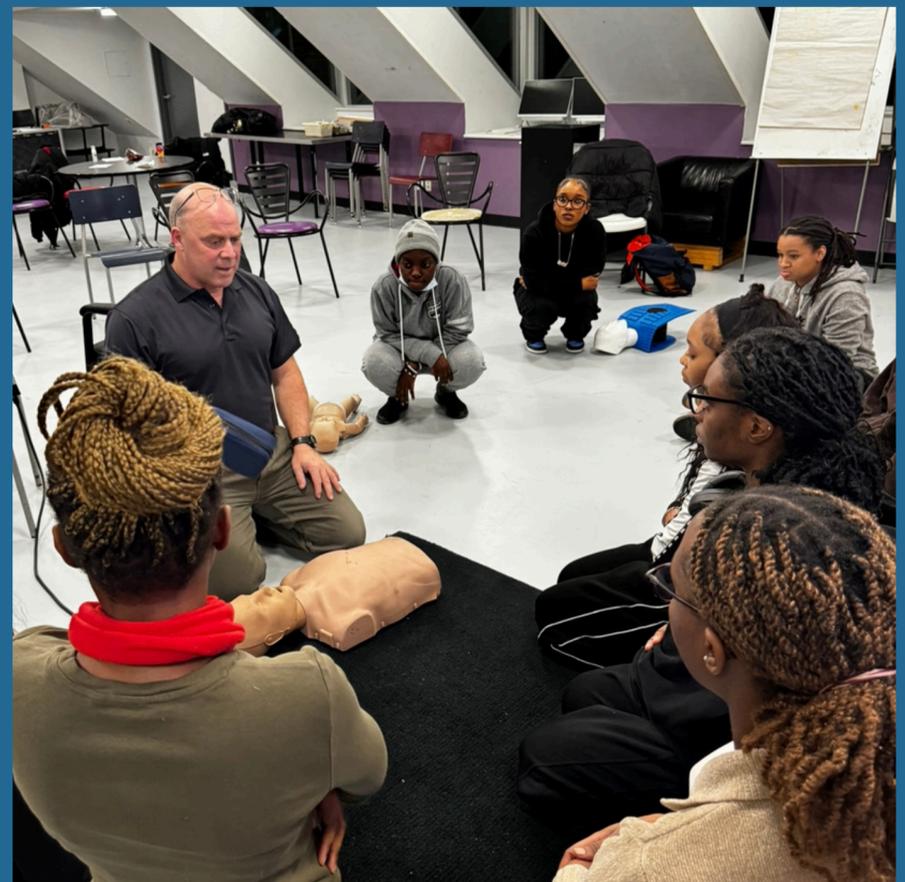
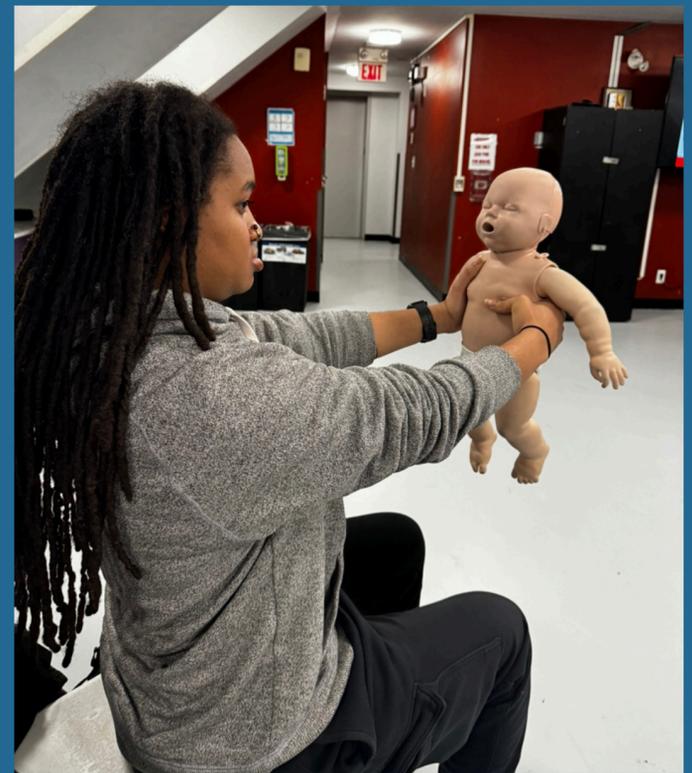
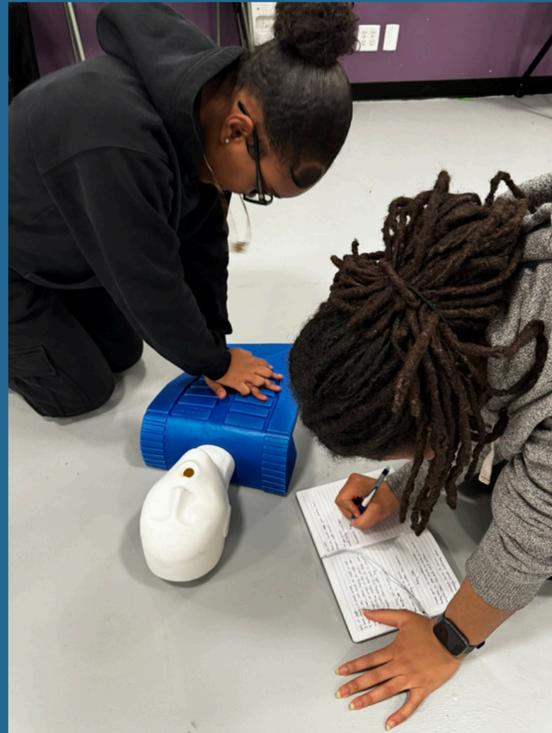
**Impact:** 10 youth aged 13-25 received their CPR & First Aid training and learned life-saving skills, now being able to respond to emergencies.



## Community Voices: Advocacy For Gun Violence

This workshop helped youth understand the impact of Gun Violence, learn how to become advocates for positive change and develop practical strategies for community engagement and advocacy.

Being a positive contributor and advocate in our community is important and to address issues that not only affect us but affect those around us.



## Healing Through Art

Facilitated by Shanice Harris that consisted of using art as an expression of healing through Neurographic art that is a tool used to allow individuals to externalize their feelings, process difficult emotions, and find peace through art expressions.

**Impact:** Participants cited this as the most valuable component, with many expressing that it was the first time using neurographic art.



## Building Tomorrow's Leaders: Youth Conference

Participants engaged in weekly workshops covering:

- Public Speaking
- Team-building exercises
- Decision-making in high-pressure situations
- Worksheets, Poetry and storytelling.

The objective was to build confidence and cultivate a sense of agency.

**Impact:** 90% of participants reported increased confidence in leading group activities or community projects.



# PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Quantitative Outcomes

- Helped over 100 youth in total.
- 10 Certified in CPR & First Aid Training.
- 6 workshops launched through the result of the program.
- 95% of Youth requested future workshops.

## Qualitative Outcomes

- Renewed sense of purpose and agency among participants.
- Stronger community bonds among Regent Park Youth.
- Development of youth mentors to continue peer outreach.
- A shift in narrative from fear to resilience within the Congolese-Canadian community.



# TESTIMONIALS FROM YOUTH PARTICIPANTS



This program youth unlocked has been such a good help for I and my community, the CPR and the guest speakers as those skills can truly make a difference in critical moments. The guest speakers are always a highlight, bringing fresh perspectives and valuable insights that can inspire and empower. Knowing that the program is making a positive impact is really rewarding. - Hillary Ojo



The one thing I liked about the Gun Violence Prevention Program is making new connections and learning and understanding different perspectives of people's ideas of the solution to resolve the issue of gun violence in Toronto.



The event I attended helped me by instilling confidence in the things I want to do and showed me that I am not alone in the struggles I face. - A



CPR & First Aid gave me the tools to help people - A

## Looking Ahead: Sustaining the Impact

**Following the success of this 3 month political, we are committed to:**

- Offering a summer workshops of the program.
- Partnering with local schools for outreach and prevention.
- Creating a youth ambassador council for long-term leadership.
- Developing a toolkit for communities to replicate the model.

### Meet the Team Behind the Project

**Founder:** Kimora Lee Harris-Taylor

**Mentor:** Shanice Harris

**Peer Leader:** Silja Mitange

**Peer Facilitator:** Ariana Vassell

### Contact Us

**For more information or to support our youth initiatives:**

 [youthh.unlocked@gmail.com](mailto:youthh.unlocked@gmail.com)

