Teen Violence Is Spreading… Essay, Research Paper

Teen violence is spreading like wild fire. It is everywhere. In fact if you were to pick up a newspaper right now, I can assure you that you would find at least three articles have to do with some type of problem that a juvenile has created. Juvenile crime is on the rise. But the reason is not media violence, rap music or gun availability-easy scapegoats that have little to do with the patterns of violence in real life. Rather, the reason is rising youth poverty. Juvenile crime is closely tied to youth poverty and the growing opportunity gap between wealthier, older people and destitute, younger people. What age category are people most likely to victims of crime? Teenagers in the age range of 12-19 years old are most common targets. Why is it that teens this age are more frequently victims? Teens have a lifestyle that puts them in locations where there are more crimes and at prime target times for these crimes. Teens of this age are not only the victims, but also the felons. They are of both genders and different races. The amount of girls committing crimes has increased. Girls used to get in trouble as accomplices to boys, but this is no longer true. Girls don’t need boys anymore. Their attitudes towards their crimes are often as hard as the weapons they yield. While boys still account for the vast majority of juvenile crimes, girls are starting to catch up. Nationwide, between 1985 and 1989, arrests for violent crimes, increased 30 percent for girls under 18. This is twice as fast as the rate for boys. In New York City alone, from 1987 and 1990, robbery and assault arrests for girls increased at triple the rate for boys. The increase in female crimes happened when the rate for overall juvenile crime was at an all time low. Girls aren’t immune to the cycle of violence afflicting many homes. When the family fails, they turn to delinquency.The phenomenon of girls involved in violent crimes is so new. The attitudes of the girls are almost more disturbing than the crimes they are being arrested for. A lot of them seem to view violence as a big thrill. These people have no goals. They have “no ability to conceptualize beyond the immediate future; theirs is a lost generation.” Up until recently, girls were more often protected at home. Now they’re not. So they are able to act the way unprotected people act. These are the girls who have stopped noticing that people get hurt and if you throw firecrackers and poison at someone, there’s some feelings there. They’ve deadened their feelings. Anything is legal if it means survival. From the time the black male is born, the odds are stacked against him. A woman, according to a 1990 census heads 45 percent of all black households. Seventy-seven percent of those households have children under 18 years of age. Homicide was the number one killer of black males in that age group last year. Even if he escapes violent death, an adult black male has a greater chance than a white male of dying from cancer, diabetes, or heart disease. Last year, death rates for these diseases were twice as high for black males as for white males. Graduation rates for black males were 13 percent lower than for white males last year. They are becoming “a throw away people.” While community leaders struggle to solve the problem, the young men caught in the middle of it are losing ground. In the past few years, several groups have cropped up to try to fill the young black males need for attention before gangs have a chance to. If you can’t remove the culture from the young man, you can remove the young man from the culture. This is an approach that many people are taking in order to improve young black males’ lives. They are removing the boy from the surroundings that distract him, such as schools, communities and even families. They are putting them in foster homes in upper class areas in hopes they will reform, or in some cases protect them from the violence that they were living in before. On the down side, many black males have been removed form the culture and tossed into prisons. Nearly 25 percent of black males nationwide are in some stage of the legal process, either awaiting trial or in prison already.

All of this is just another genocide of black males. The government keeps them unemployed and pushes them into becoming crack dealer and prostitutes to survive. Someday, if they don’t give them what they want, which is only equality, they’ll take it themselves. Role models have changed throughout the years and so it has changed the way they juveniles act. The role models of today are the people who drive expensive cars, wear designer clothes, and expensive jewelry. The role model of the past was the churchgoing, Christian, with the stable life; they are no longer looked at as idols of the teenagers, they are more often shunned. Last year, nearly 1400 cases of residents assaulting each other were reported in detention centers where the children wait for up to 21 days for trials and commitments. This is a 348 percent increase from 1986. This figure does not include long-term commitment programs which are supposed to help rehabilitate kids. As many as half of the children in the system have mental heath problems or are too violent for these programs in which they are placed. Overcrowding is one of the key ingredients feeding the violence in delinquency programs. Overcrowding of the facilities is inflaming violence with some of the facilities housing nearly twice as many as authorized. Cramped quarters, a result of rising crime and changing rules of confinement, leads to clients sleeping in hallways and fighting over beds and chairs. This, in turn leads to more violent flare-ups. At any one time, there could be 70-80 children in a facility built for 45 people; this of course will cause problems. “You’ve got to hurt somebody to get respect. Otherwise, your time here will be hell,” says one inmate of the juvenile detention center he is in. In the right setting, anyone can be pushed to blows. In the centers, there are beatings, rapes and even deaths. He says, “I understand what I did wrong (which was murdering his abusive stepfather, to protect his mother) and now I’m paying for it. I realize that I if was old enough to do the crime, than I am old enough to do the time.” At what age do children develop a moral sense, and understand what it means? Younger and younger, children are being tried as adults in our courts. This raises the question; at what age can we expect a youngster to understand moral choices and consequences? The juvenile system was set up under the premise that juveniles are not as mature as adults are and cannot be held to the same standards as adults. But as juveniles are committing more crimes, the push is on to try younger children as adults. This means that longer prison terms will be enforced, in adult prisons, where the emphasis is on punishment and not rehabilitation. They punish for the act already committed but don’t try to prevent further acts of violence that the juvenile might commit. What can parents do to ensure that their children grow up with moral values and a conscience? They have to be there for their children. They need to always be around and give as much support to them as they can. Live the right values. It’s not what they teach that the child learns, the child learns from watching what parents do; for example if a parent went out and got drunk or stoned, the child is going to perceive that as being ok, and go do it. You have to “practice what you preach.” Treat your child, how you would want him to treat others. Lastly, instill self-esteem. The more you can help your child feel as if he is worthwhile, the more he will be willing to do good to others and help others feel as though they are worthwhile.