

Chicago's youth violence epidemic is your problem

Many of us hear about kids like Hadiya Pendleton getting shot on the South and West Sides and assume there's nothing we can do. **Alex Kotlowitz**, renowned author and producer of the documentary *The Interrupters*, argues our city's children deserve better. Illustration by **Øivind Hovland**

The numbers are unimaginable. During this century's first decade, 5,352 people were killed in Chicago and, according to an estimate from the University of Chicago Crime Lab, another 24,392 were wounded by gunfire. So many that the violence has spawned its own language: To "change" someone is to kill them; a "black cat" refers to a woman who has children fathered by at least two men who have been murdered. So many that funeral homes have rules about burying the murdered: only during the day. No hats. Police present. So many that during the spring and summer, makeshift street-side memorials—consisting of balloons and flowers and liquor bottles—pop up like perennials in full bloom. So many that people arm themselves in self-defense, and so the police pull anywhere from 7,000 to 8,000 guns off the street each year. So many that *RIP* is commonly scrawled on walls, embroidered on shirts and hats, and tattooed on bodies. So many that should you walk into a classroom in any of these communities, virtually every child will tell you he or she has seen someone shot. Indeed, the vast majority of murders—82 percent of them in 2011—occur in outdoor spaces such as parks and streets and alleyways.

I recently met one high-school student, Thomas, who rattled off for his social worker the people he's seen shot. The first was at a birthday party for a friend who was turning 11. She was shot and killed when a stray bullet struck her in the head. Then Thomas saw his brother shot, on two occasions, the second time paralyzing him. He saw a friend shot while waiting at the bus stop. And then this

past summer as Thomas chatted on a porch with a fellow student, a boy with a gun approached. Thomas begged him not to shoot, but he ignored the pleas, and Thomas's 16-year-old friend was shot three times in her torso. She died on the porch. After this last incident (*incident* seems completely inadequate for such bloodshed), Thomas retreated into himself, pulling inward, unwilling, unable to acknowledge his grief. He could only manage to tell his social worker, "I want to hurt someone. I want to hurt someone." It was the only way he could articulate the pain.

We think that somehow people get hardened to the violence, that they get accustomed to the shootings. I've made that mistake myself. When I first met Lafayette, one of the two boys whose lives I chronicled in 1991's *There Are No Children Here*, he recounted the time a teenaged neighbor had been shot in a gang war and stumbled into the stairwell outside his apartment. There, the boy died. I remember that as Lafayette recounted this moment, he showed virtually no emotion, and I thought to myself, He didn't care. Over time I came to realize that the problem wasn't that Lafayette didn't have feelings. It was that he felt too much, and the one thing he could do to protect himself was to try to compartmentalize his life, to push the dark stuff into a corner where he hoped it wouldn't haunt him.

But the violence festers. It tears at one's soul. I've met kids who experience flashbacks, kids who have night terrors, kids—like Thomas—who become filled with rage, kids who self-medicate, kids who have physical ailments (Lafayette would get stomachaches whenever

there were shootings), kids whose very being is defined by the thunderous deaths around them. For many, it's a single act of violence around which the rest of a childhood will revolve. And then there are parents who must bury a child, who swim under a sea of what-ifs and regrets. One mother and father I knew visited their 15-year-old son's gravesite every day for nearly a year, even grilling meals there. A mother whose 14-year-old boy was executed by a gang member grieved so deeply that for a time she only had a taste for sand. Another mother so mourned the loss of her son she kept his bedroom just as he'd left it as a kind of memorial: his slippers by the end of his bed, his basketball balanced precariously on his dresser and his collection of M&Ms dispensers lined up on a closet shelf.

In a forthcoming book, *How Long Will I Cry? Voices of Youth Violence*, edited by DePaul's Miles Harvey (see page 16), you'll meet a number of parents who have lost children to the city's violence. One of them, Pamela Hester-Jones, says of her son Lazarus, "He loved art and loved to dance. He liked jazz music, and he loved to draw. He loved to swim, he loved going to play golf, he loved going to the movies, he loved Hot Pockets and vanilla ice cream. . . . I let my Lazarus go outside. I would never do it again." Is that what we've come to? That the world is such a threatening place it's best not to let your children leave their houses?

These are parents and communities who have lost loved ones. They've lost ground. They've lost hope. They've lost trust. They've lost a part of themselves. Drive through the city's West and South Sides and you'll be greeted by an array of Block Club signs. On each of them, neighbors have listed not what they celebrate, but rather what they dread: NO GAMBLING (PENNY PITCHING OR DICE PLAYING). NO DRUG DEALING. NO ALCOHOL DRINKING. NO SITTING IN OR ON CARS. These signs speak not to their dreams, but rather to their fears. These are communities, to borrow a term from the world of psychology, that are hypervigilant, that are back on their heels, trying, understandably, to keep the world at bay.

In *How Long Will I Cry?*, one former gang member says to his interviewer, "We're telling each other, 'You're not alone in this.'" It's something many need to remind themselves of because more than anything the violence pushes people away from each other like slivers of magnets of opposite poles. Neighbors come to distrust neighbors. Residents come to distrust the police, and the police come to distrust the residents. The police decry the no-smitching maxim, and think it's solely because residents don't respect the police. There is, indeed, a history there, most notably the torture committed by Commander Jon Burge and his underlings—though what really had people incensed was not so much that it had

occurred but that for so many years those in positions of power, from Mayor Daley on down, refused to concede it happened. But people also don't snitch because they don't trust each other, because they no longer feel a part of something, because they no longer feel safe.

Which brings us to the blunt, discomfiting truth about the violence: Most of it occurs in deeply impoverished African-American and Latino neighborhoods, places where aspiration and ambition have withered and shrunk like, well, a raisin in the sun. Look at a map of the murders and shootings; they cut a swath through the South and West Sides, like a thunderstorm barreling through the city. How can there not be a link between a loss of hope and the ease with which spats explode into something more? When we were filming *The Interrupters*, Ameena Matthews, one of the three Violence Interrupters whose work we chronicled, reflected on what she calls "the 30 seconds of rage." She described it like this: "I didn't eat this morning. I'm wearing my niece's clothes. I just was violated by my mom's boyfriend. I go to school, and here comes someone that bumps into me and don't say excuse me. You hit zero to rage within 30 seconds, and you act out." In other words, these are young men and women who are burdened by fractured families, by lack of money, by a closing window of opportunity, by a sense that they don't belong, by a feeling of low self-worth. And so when they feel disrespected or violated, they explode, often out of proportion with the moment, because so much other hurt has built up, surging, threatening to burst.

Then there's the rest of us who hear of youngsters gunned down while riding their bike or walking down an alley or coming from a party, and think, They must have done something to deserve it, they must

have been up to no good. Virtually every teen and young man shot, the police tell us, belonged to a gang, as if suggesting that "what goes around, comes around." But life in these communities is more tangled than that. You can't grow up in certain neighborhoods and not be affiliated, because of geography or lineage. (An administrator at one South Side high school estimates that 90 percent of the boys there are identified with one clique or another.) Moreover, it's often safer to belong than not to belong. You want someone watching your back. And honestly, as Matthews suggests, many if not most of the disputes stem not from gang conflicts but rather from seemingly petty matters like disrespecting someone's girlfriend, or cutting in line, or simply mean-mugging. This doesn't explain the madness. Not at all. It's just to suggest that it's more complicated and more profound than readings of a daily newspaper or viewings of the evening news would suggest.

These neighborhoods are so physically and spiritually isolated from the rest of us that we might as well be living in different cities. When was the last time you had lunch in Englewood? Or tossed a football in Garfield Park? Or got your car repaired in Little Village? Or went for a stroll in the Back of the Yards? To understand—I mean really understand—what it's like to grow up in these communities requires a leap of faith. For reasons that no one can really explain, Chicago has been the epicenter for very public and horrifying youth murders—Yummy Sandifer, Eric Morse, Ryan Harris, Derrion Albert and now Hadiya Pendleton. And each time public officials shout, "never again," and then do very little to strengthen these neighborhoods, do very little to ensure a sense of opportunity—real opportunity—for the kids. Let's be frank, we've abandoned these places, just walked

away. We tore down the public-housing high-rises and, in places like the State Street corridor, have rebuilt just a little more than half of what was promised. We talk of dismantling neighborhood schools in communities where the local school is the very fiber that holds things together. A place like Englewood is pockmarked by boarded-up, abandoned homes, as many as every other structure on some blocks. Where's the outcry? Sometimes it feels like even a nod of acknowledgement would do.

Yet in the midst of all this, people in these impoverished neighborhoods go about their lives. They hold down jobs. They raise families. They go to school. They play basketball and skip rope. They attend church and get their hair done. They shop and grill and mow their lawns (and the lawns of neighboring vacant lots). They tend their gardens and rake their yards. They gossip and share a beer. In other words, despite the five people each day (on average) who are shot, people still are immersed in the routine and banal. They seek some normalcy. So lest we forget, those in Englewood share more than you might think with those, say, in Lincoln Square. Maybe it's not a leap of faith that's required, but rather just simply a faith, that everyone wants the best for themselves and for those around them.

A few years ago, on the city's West Side, someone posted a handmade wood sign on a tree. It read: WE ARE ALL GOOD PEOPLE. It felt as much a statement of fact as it did a plea, really, that things need not be this way. And yet all these promises. Like tear down public housing, and the poor will be better off.

These are young men and women who, despite the cacophony of their neighborhoods, live in silence.

Alex Kotlowitz contributes to a two-part series about youth violence on American Public Radio's This American Life Friday 15 and February 22. See "30 ways you can stop the violence," page 14.

The violence festers. It tears at one's soul.



5 THINGS CHICAGO POLICE CAN LEARN FROM AURORA

Chicago's homicide rate made international news last year when it reached 506 murders. So did the homicide rate for our neighbor 40 miles to the west, but for a different reason: Aurora, the second-largest city in Illinois, had no murders last year. Zero. (So far this year, it has clocked one.)

Of course, Chicago houses 2.7 million residents while Aurora is home to about 200,000 people. But it wasn't so long ago that Aurora had a crime problem. In 2002, Aurora counted 26 murders—or nearly the same number per capita as Chicago's 2012 figure. Aurora police chief Greg Thomas is quick to credit the sharp decrease in violence to the rise of community programs, but the police force also played it smart. Here's what it has done right:

1 Nurture a network of citizen cops. In some cases, police officers give out their cell-phone numbers to block captains of neighborhood watch groups, Thomas says.

2 Step in before it's too late. As part of the "Knock and Talk" program, when police officers hear about a teenager hanging around with a gang, they visit that teen's home to talk with him or her and his or her parents "about the ills of joining gangs," Thomas says. "We try to have intervention early."

3 Focus on drug arrests to get criminals off the streets. "It was easier to target drug offenses than violent offenses" during widespread sweeps, and the same perpetrators were often committing both, Thomas says.

4 Be realistic. Just because a policing program in another city sounds promising doesn't mean it's going to be the right fit for Aurora. To the north, the city of Elgin has been running the Resident Officer Program of Elgin, in which officers live in distressed neighborhoods throughout the city. A program like that, according to Thomas, wouldn't have been a great fit for Aurora in part because of the financial resources involved. "Chicago [police have] helicopters," Thomas adds, "and I'm not going to purchase helicopters."

5 Consistently talk with residents. Aurora police began holding public discussions about the rising number of shootings and murders. Now, Thomas says, "instead of gangs, drugs and violence, we talk about parking, speeding and loud music."
—Erin Chan Ding

Youth violence

\$ Donate
 i Inform yourself
 V Volunteer

February
2013

17

Volunteer as an after-school mentor or summer program coordinator with **Enlace Chicago**, which runs programs that focus on safety, grief support, art, advocacy, mentorship and violence interruption. 773-542-9233 (enlacechicago.org).

18

You don't have to live in Austin—the neighborhood with the highest number of violent crimes in the city—to become a member of **Austin Coming Together**, a group that aims to build networks among businesses, religious and nonprofit organizations, and residents. 773-417-8612 (austincomingtogether.org).

19

Registration for the Chicago Marathon begins at noon today. Visit chicagomarathon.com to sign up as a charity runner for **Chicago Run**, which coordinates running programs for 4,500 students, many of whom live in areas where safety issues make it hard to run recreationally. chicagorun.org.

20

Donate to the **Broken Wingz Foundation**, a Chicago organization that provides support to paralyzed gunshot victims. Find a PayPal donation link at brokenwingz.com.

24

Corey Brooks, the South Side pastor who camped out in a tent on a motel roof for 94 days last year to raise money to knock down the motel, still needs more than \$13 million to build a community center for at-risk youth in its place. Through June 21, buy a \$65 raffle ticket that could win you a 2013 Ford Fusion or a \$2,500 shopping spree. coreybrooks.com.

25

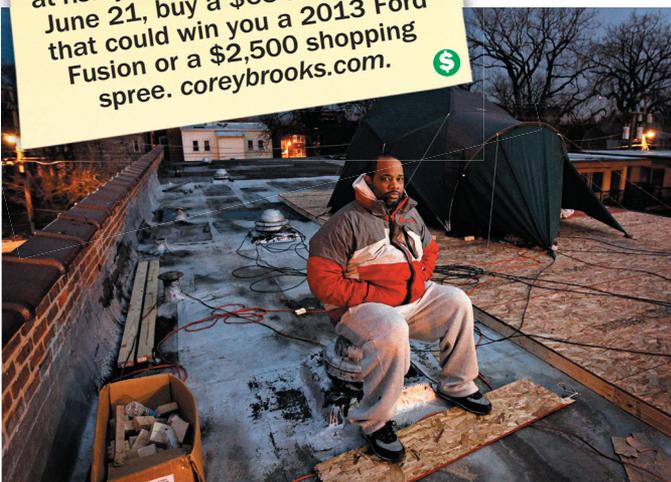
Want to contact a state legislator or local editor about gun violence but not sure how to start? **The Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence** has a toolkit with tips, sample letters and student petitions to help kids get involved. icpgv.org.

26

Learn more about the **Chicago Police Department's Expanded Anti-Violence Initiative** at a meeting for the 7th District, which encompasses Englewood. 11am-1pm. 7th District Community Room, 1438 W 63rd St (312-747-6722).

27

The Crime Lab at the University of Chicago's **"Gun Violence Among School-Age Youth in Chicago"** report analyzes youth violence and discusses what can be done about it. Read it at crimelab.uchicago.edu.



30 ways you can STOP THE VIOLENCE

A month's worth of opportunities to help curb Chicago's epidemic, from mentoring at-risk kids to simply donating money.

By Erin Chan Ding

3

Volunteer at the **Little Black Pearl Art & Design Center** in North Kenwood, a nonprofit that provides classes and camps in painting, dance, spoken word and more to kids and teens in Kenwood/Oakland, Woodlawn and Bronzeville. Contact Chinyera Moody at 773-285-1211, ext 307 or cmoody@blackpearl.org.

4

Donate to the **True Star Foundation**, a nonprofit organization that equips teens with skills like graphic design, photography, marketing and journalism that they can use in their aspiring careers. 312-588-0100 (truestarfoundation.org).

The **Resident Association of Greater Englewood**, or R.A.G.E., invites all Chicagoans to become members and help build up the community through work groups that focus on economic and youth development, as well as on civic engagement. The next meeting is March 19. 866-845-1032 (ragenglewood.org).

10

Take students from Kohn Elementary to weekly meetings that address topics like conflict resolution as a volunteer with **Greater Roseland Community Committee's Youth Voices Against Violence**, founded by Gwen Baxter after she lost her son to gun violence. Contact Baxter at 773-629-8804.

11

Request educational materials, like a poster outlining 95 ways to help a child exposed to violence, from the **Chicago Department of Public Health's Office of Violence Prevention**. chicagosafestart.net.

12

Get involved with **After School Matters**, a partner with CPS and the legacy of Maggie Daley, which offers after-school programs in such areas as Web development, dance, creative writing, tennis, biology and computer animation. afterschoollmatters.org.

13

PHOTO: BRIAN CASSELLA/GETTY IMAGE

14

45/320
Valentine's Day

Chicago aims to halve the number of violent incidents in the city by 2020. Familiarize yourself with the city's **Youth Violence Prevention Plan**, presented in Washington last April by Mayor Rahm Emanuel. cityofchicago.org.



15

46/319

Tune in to **This American Life** on WBEZ tonight and Feb 22 to hear writer Alex Kotlowitz talk about spending four months with students and staff at Englewood's W.R. Harper High School the year after 27 students had been shot. 7pm. wbez.org.



16

47/318

E-mail Illinois Senators Mark Kirk and Dick Durbin from the **Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence** site to urge them to require background checks on all gun sales, including those at gun shows. bradynetwork.org.



21

52/313

Watch training videos from **Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere**, an initiative from the Centers for Disease Control, to better understand some risk factors for youth violence, including social rejection by peers. The videos also help identify ways your community can help. vetoviolence.org.



22

53/312

Pledge to spread the word about the **National Violent Death Reporting System**, which aims to generate data on crime patterns to help with violence-prevention strategies. Illinois has approved the system but lacks the funding to run it. preventviolence.net.



23

54/311

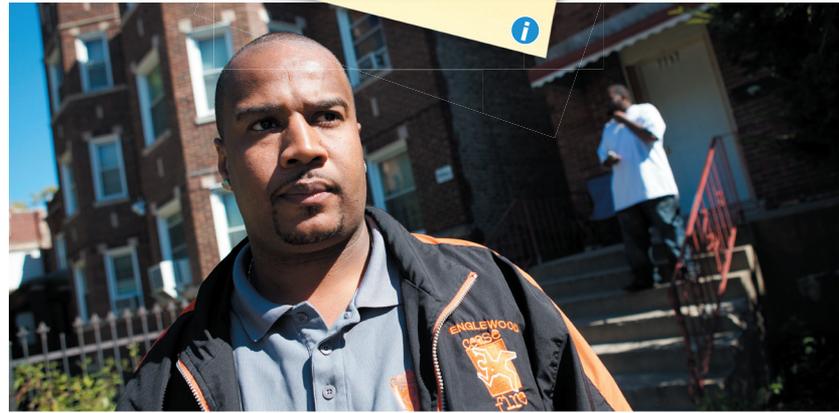
Stream the 2011 documentary **The Interrupters** for free. pbs.org.



28

59/306

Drop into an **all-ages meeting led by teens** to hear their thoughts about reducing violence in their neighborhoods. 6:30pm. Multicultural Academy of Scholarship's Little Village Lawndale High School campus, 3120 S Kostner Ave (nowisthetimechicago.org).



WEDNESDAY

March 2013

1

60/305

Yollocalli Arts Reach, an initiative of the National Museum of Mexican Art in Pilsen, offers classes for teens and kids on topics like fashion blogging in an effort to give youth a creative outlet. Sign up to promote events, fund-raise or teach. 312-455-9652, ext 210 (yollocalli.org).



2

61/304

Catch the first public performance of **How Long Will I Cry?**, a new Steppenwolf show that tells the true stories of Chicago youth who have been directly affected by gun violence. 11am. steppenwolf.org. See page 16.



7

65/300

Train yourself on how to approach kids who have been exposed to violence with a series of videos from **Chicago Safe Start**. chicagosafestart.net.



Donate to the **Illinois State Crime Commission/Police Athletic League of Illinois**, a nonprofit that focuses on reducing juvenile delinquency by giving youth alternatives, as with a boxing initiative that has the participation of Rasheda Ali-Walsh, the daughter of Muhammad Ali. illinoiscrimecommission.com.



8

67/298

Teach kids yoga. Give girls a spa day. **Uhlich Children's Advantage Network**, or UCAN, headed by Thomas Vanden Berk, who lost his 15-year-old son to gun violence, helps youth and their families, especially kids who have experienced trauma. Contact Ellen Acevedo at 312-738-5911 or acevedoe@ucanchicago.org.



9

68/297

Cheer on some at-risk teens at the team finals for "**Louder than a Bomb**," the annual spoken-word poetry competition showcasing the life experiences of hundreds of students from all over Chicago. 6-9pm. Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W Randolph St (wbez.org).



14

72/293

Buy a cupcake at **Blue Sky Bakery**, which employs at-risk and homeless youth to teach them job skills and the culinary arts. 3720 N Lincoln Ave (773-880-9910, blue-sky-bakery.org).



As part of **Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy**, each police district's subcommittee arranges for volunteers to show up at important court dates. A filled courtroom demonstrates people care about stopping crime and violence. 312-744-4000.



15

74/291

Get involved with the **Youth Violence Prevention Week Campaign** through local SAVE chapters. The campaign (March 18-22) runs workshops and discussions on promoting respect and tolerance, resolving conflicts and more. nyvpw.org.



16

75/290

PHOTO: AARON WICKENDEN

“For real change to be made, you’ve gotta change hearts.”

A new show at Steppenwolf presents the real stories of Chicago youths affected by violence. By **Kris Vire**
Photograph by **Dave Rentauskas**

When I go out at night, it’s like walking through Baghdad or something. You don’t know when somebody might pop out or shoot at you.”

This harrowing account of a Chicago neighborhood is spoken onstage by an actor in the latest production by Steppenwolf for Young Adults. But it isn’t fiction—it was first spoken by a young West Side resident describing daily life in a city with more youth homicides than any other in America.

The young man is one of several Chicagoans represented in *How Long Will I Cry? Voices of Youth Violence*, an interview-based accounting of the city’s epidemic of youth violence. The play, which opens at Steppenwolf Theatre Company February 26 and will subsequently tour Chicago Public Library branches around the city, is compiled by journalist Miles Harvey from a variety of primary sources, including court transcripts, police documents and interviews with about 70 individuals conducted by Harvey and his creative-nonfiction students at DePaul University, where he’s an assistant professor in the English department.

“For the past two years, my students have been going all over the city to interview people directly affected by youth violence,” Harvey says on a gray January day at Steppenwolf, a few hours after President Obama laid out his administration’s plan to address gun violence. “We talked to a lot of kids: kids in gangs, kids on the borderline of gangs and kids out. We talked to victims’ parents, we talked to cops, we talked to funeral-home directors, we talked to the [then] county coroner. Just anyone who’s got a really direct stake in this.”

“Going through some of those [interviews] is devastating,” adds Edward Torres, the production’s director. “We really don’t want to sugarcoat anything.”

The play was born out of conversations between Harvey and his friend Hallie Gordon, the artistic and educational director of the Steppenwolf for Young Adults program. “The Derrion Albert murder had happened, and the

viral video was out,” Harvey says, recalling the 2009 beating death of the Fenger Academy High School student that was captured on cell-phone video and posted to the Internet, riling the city.

“She said, ‘I have this idea for a piece of documentary theater, à la *The Laramie Project*, about youth-violence issues in Chicago. But I could never pull that off. We don’t have the resources at Steppenwolf for getting people out to do interviews,’” Harvey says. “And I said, ‘I think I could supply the troops for that.’”

Harvey teaches oral-history techniques to his graduate and undergraduate classes “because I think it’s a really great way to get students thinking about storytelling,” he says. The youth-violence project offered a real-world application. “For a lot of them, it was a stretch; they were seeing parts of the city they’d never seen before, because we wanted them to go to people’s neighborhoods, not have people come to DePaul for a sit-down in a nice, safe conference room.”

Among the main characters depicted in *How Long Will I Cry?* are youths from Humboldt Park, Jefferson Park and North Lawndale, along with public figures like Diane Latiker, the founder of the Roseland antiviolence nonprofit Kids Off the Block, and Pastor Corey Brooks of Woodlawn’s New Beginnings Church, who camped out on the roof of an abandoned motel near his church at 66th Street and King Drive over a year ago in an effort to raise money to demolish the motel and build a community center as a safe space for kids in high-crime neighborhoods (see page 14). Brooks provides the play’s title, from the Old Testament Book of Habakkuk: “O Lord, how long will I cry, and you will not hear? I cry out to you ‘Violence!’ and will you not save?”

“I asked [Brooks], what have you learned?” Harvey says. “He said, ‘One of the things I’ve learned is that you can change laws all you want, and I still want laws to change. But for real change to be made, you’ve gotta change hearts. That’s the tricky kind of change.’”

Another major figure in the play was never interviewed by Harvey or his students. DePaul student Francisco “Frankie” Valencia was shot to



CROWD SOURCED Journalist Miles Harvey, shown here with the cast of *How Long Will I Cry?* (including director Edward Torres, right side, fourth from right, and artistic consultant Kelli Simpkins, right side, seated, front), compiled the play’s stories from court transcripts, police documents and interviews conducted by his DePaul University students.

death by alleged gang members outside a Halloween party in Humboldt Park in 2009. The bright, ambitious 21-year-old is represented via writings and videos he left behind, as well as the recollections of his mother, Joy McCormack, and his friend Daisy Camacho, who was injured in the shooting. All three are portrayed onstage.

Harvey, a first-time dramatist, got assistance in paring down the more than 4,000 pages of transcripts from Kelli Simpkins, one of the original creators of *The Laramie Project* as a member of Tectonic Theater Project. She’s also collaborated on other “verbatim theater” pieces, including the Jonestown chronicle *The People’s Temple*, seen at American Theater Company in 2008.

“I came in and we started doing workshops with Hallie, Miles and a few of his graduate



students who were really in-depth working on this project. We got in a room and just started hearing the material,” Simpkins says. “I asked a lot of questions—anything that might help him to engage the material in a certain way, find a way to organize it and find out what characters in the room really created a *whew!* kind of moment.”

“Her experience with this sort of documentary-style theater has been so invaluable in making sure the stories being told are honest and direct and hopefully will affect people—get people to really listen,” Torres says.

“We talked to a nurse at Stroger Hospital in the trauma unit, who just—his perspective on things was so interesting and amazing, dealing with shot-up kids all the time,” Harvey says. “The county coroner talking about how hard it is to push a

scalpel through skin, just physically, the first time—but also emotionally, like, you’re violating this body. A lot of these kids just talked really openly about their fears—their terror of both being in the gang and getting out of the gang.”

Harvey and his students sometimes experienced resistance in the communities they entered. “I wasn’t always well received. Some people said, ‘White man, why are you stealing our stories? You’ve got no business coming here and taking our stories,’” Harvey says. “The second part, what I heard from some of the same people was, ‘Why isn’t anyone paying attention to these stories?’ The thing I always tell my students is, people want to be heard. Most people, if you approach them the right way, want to tell their stories.”

Only a fraction of those stories could be used in the play, so Harvey and his students are producing a companion book to contain additional interviews, tentatively scheduled for publication this spring; it’ll be distributed free to community groups and educators.

“We are well aware that we’re not pioneers in this effort,” Harvey says. “But one thing I always tell my students is I believe in the power of bearing witness. What we’re really trying to do is take a measure of the cost, the human cost of this violence.”

Public performances of How Long Will I Cry? are March 2, 4, 9, 18 and 23 at Steppenwolf. Visit steppenwolf.org for the schedule of Chicago Public Library performances.