

Lopez: 'I am going to scream with the force of the law'

DURHAM — Where are the screams?

Three Latino juveniles (a boy and two girls) ages 16, 14 and 12 killed a man for his vehicle during Christmas week. Last month, a 13-year-old girl was killed by her 15-year-old brother with a gun belonging to their 18-year-old brother. This same brother with three other Latino juveniles shot and injured other Latinos at a flea market in December. During this same time period many shots were fired at the houses of Latino families and in one case a man was shot as he mowed his grass. These shots came from firearms in the hands of Latino juveniles. Today many of these juveniles are in jail.

In 1954 my father and mother (who was pregnant with me) came to the United States with my sister. They left their roots and the island of Puerto Rico. They were not looking for the Statue of Liberty or Disneyland. My father was looking for the opportunities that exist in the United States, where a poor person can rise from his or her station and their children can pursue their dreams. Many Latino families came to the United States for this same reason

The main reason that brought us to this country are our children who are throwing away their lives and wasting the sacrifices that their parents made for them. The Latino community bears the blame because they are not taking the action that is necessary to stop the violence and gangs that exist.

You are not screaming.

What value is there in a driver's license or immigration reform if we are killing ourselves? Many say that they are afraid to cooperate with the police or confront their children. It took a lot of courage to come to this land, leaving your country and crossing the frontier. The time has come when it is necessary to find the courage that brought us here and use it to save our children and our families.

For over five years I have been working as chief of police to improve the lives of everyone in Durham, and I ask that you not only help me but, help yourselves to stop these tragedies. How? By identifying those who are in these gangs, where the firearms are stored and disarming your own children which are important in order to stop the violence.

Respect begins in the home and if we as a Latino community don't respect ourselves then how can we expect to be respected?

I am going to scream with the force of the law. Please scream with me.

Jose L. Lopez is Durham chief of police. A version of this column, in Spanish, originally appeared in local Spanish-language publications.