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Teens making some urbanNOISE to help silence the violence

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Rexdale teenager George Macharashvili used to get into fights every week.

Now Macharashvili has found an outlet for his pain and frustrations in rap.

"I used to have problems at home, at school and on the streets," said Macharashvili known as Danger on stage. "I couldn't talk to anyone because no one would listen."

Today, the 17 year old, who emigrated from Russia four years ago, is using rap to speak out against violence in his neighbourhood and is one of the stars of urbanNOISE, an unusual youth-oriented festival targeting violence in the GTA.

"A life — you can't take back what you took from someone else," said Macharashvili, dressed in a loose white T-shirt, black-and-white bandana and baggy black pants. "You can't

come back from the dead."

Featuring spoken word performances, emceeing, deejaying and beatboxing, the two-day festival kicked off yesterday and will continue today, starting at 3 p.m. More than 130 students from four high schools participated in training programs leading up to the event.

The festival is taking place in Rexdale, where many of the festival's stars live. The problem-plagued community is also

home to street gangs and violence that included last year's fatal shooting of an 18-year-old man at the funeral of a slain friend.

"It's a tough place to grow up," said Laura Mullin, co-artistic director of urbanNOISE.

Part of the problem, said 17-year-old emcee Mohamud Ibrahim, is that kids don't have much to do. "In the 'hood, you play basketball, you rap or you do drugs," said the Somali-born

teen.

Rexdale rapper Jelleestone said the kids need to see that people care. His message to them?

"You can come from nothing and make something out of nothing."

As for Mullin, she hopes the festival will be the start of developing Rexdale into urban arts centre. "There's amazing talent here — this is the place where urban arts can thrive."