DIONTAE "TAY" REED

"I have trust issues. I don't trust people easily. Wherever I go I'm always looking."

Reed in 2015 on a follow-up appointment with his surgeon, Dr. Brian Harbrecht

At 18, Diontae "Tay" Reed seems happy, with a playful sense of humor and a lot to be proud of - good grades, a diploma from Ballard High School, a future full of possibilities including college.

He's come a long way from age 13 when he was shot in the back, underwent surgery and spent 11 days in the hospital. His homes have been shot up four different times, and he knows more people who have been shot or killed than he can count on both hands.

"I knew about the violence in my neighborhood at a young age," he said. "I have trust issues. I don't trust people easily so wherever I go I'm always looking."

89%

of the 73 murder victims, 65 people, in the first nine months of 2019 were killed by gunfire, the highest percentage of homicides by gunfire for a comparable time period in the past five years.

Now he's the first person in his family to have graduated from high school, months after he and his family – his mother and a younger sister - were evicted from their home in the Portland neighborhood. He is staying with a friend's family while his mother and sister are living apart with relatives. He takes the bus from the apartment where he is living in the Portland neighborhood to Mall St. Matthews and back for his part-time job at a shoe store.

Diontae wonders if he's ready for college, and he's deeply worried about how he would pay for tuition, but he is exploring options as he also dreams of having a driver's license and a car someday.

He credits his mother, who "was always on me" for keeping him on the right track, off the streets and focused on school. He also credits Ballard High School teachers and a special tutor for helping him achieve. "I always made teachers laugh," he said with a smile, and "they became friends to me." He can tick off the names of several he admired.

HOMICIDES
2014: **55**
2015: **80**
2016: **118**
2017: **102**
2018: **80**

Jan.- Sept., 2019:

73

Number of homicides in Louisville in the first nine months of 2019, an increase of nearly 20 percent compared to the first nine months of 2018 when 61 murders were committed.

72.6%

53, of the 73 homicide victims in the first nine months of 2019 were black, compared to 63% for the same time period in 2018.

32%

of the victims, 25 killed, were under age 25, with eight victims 11-17 years old. One victim was under age 11.

He attended Shawnee Academy his freshman year but pursued a transfer to Ballard with the help of his mother. "I felt like if I had stayed at that school I wouldn't have learned anything," because teachers spent so much time trying to control the classroom, he said.

His cousin had been doing well at Ballard, had a tutor, and he thought that formula would also work for him, and it did.

"I'm seeing I'm getting good grades," he said. "I do not want to go home and be on the streets and do something that could get me killed."

His two older brothers, 23 and 22, chose a "way different path." When he was shot four years ago, he was running away from a fight his brothers got into with another group of boys. When asked why he thought his homes had been shot up in the past, he responded, "my brothers." While he's close to them, "I could never ask them what they're doing."

While in the hospital, recovering from surgery and a collapsed lung, he was angry but told relatives and friends who visited him that he didn't want any more violence, no retaliation. He said he would have liked to have seen whoever shot him go to jail but no arrests were made.

He participated in the Christopher 2X "Hood2Hood" anti-violence campaign, preaching non-violence door-to-door and in neighborhoods and remains active in anti-violence and community service programs.

"The violence going on now is terrible, crazy," he said. "People don't even want to go outside because of what is going on."