

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Student Writings
2004

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO DO THE WRITE THING

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Do the Write Thing 2004 VIP Judges

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Guardian State Bank

Lou Callister
Callister Nebeker & McCullough

Jim Matheson
Congressman

Jeffery M. Stringham
Barnes Bank

Judge Andrew Valdez
Third District Juvenile Court

Olene S. Walker
Governor, State of Utah

Nadine Wimmer
KSL News

Community Support

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice and the Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee would like to thank the following for their generous support of Utah's Do the Write Thing Challenge.

Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley
CEO and President, Heritage Bank

Jeff Stringham
Vice President, Barnes Banking Co.

Law Firm of Callister Nebeker & McCullough

Law Firm of Hobbs & Olson, LC

The Melting Pot Restaurant

Marion Mattingly
Executive Director
National Campaign to Stop Violence

UTAH'S FOURTH ANNUAL CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

The Importance of the Do the Write Thing Challenge

Do the Write Thing is not about winning a prize. It is an essential part of a long-term strategy to help students and adults better understand each other and work together to prevent youth violence.

The *Do the Write Thing* Challenge is a program of the National Campaign to Stop Violence. The program motivates students to make a personal, written commitment to resist and combat youth violence in their communities. Young people around the country are encouraged to voice their solutions for reducing the violence that destroys so many young lives. The program works because it recognizes that the best solutions come from the communities where the violence takes place.

Utah's *Do the Write Thing Challenge* is sponsored locally by the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice. The Board monitors Utah's compliance with the core requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The Board is also responsible for administering over \$1 million in federal juvenile justice funds aimed at filling gaps in the full continuum of juvenile justice services from prevention to treatment. Members are appointed by Utah's Governor.

How the Campaign Works

Information was sent to all Utah school district superintendents and middle school principals encouraging them to involve their teachers and 7th and 8th grade students in the Challenge. Teachers were given suggestions about how to tie the Challenge into coursework. Students could research youth violence as part of a history class, write a poem as part of an English class, or even consider youth violence from a social science perspective. Following a classroom discussion about youth violence, students were asked to write answers to three questions:

How has youth violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

What can my community and I do to reduce youth violence?

School districts reported that more than 1,300 student participated in this year's Challenge with more than 1,100 submitting essays. The Board selected 11 finalists whose work was then forwarded to Utah's VIP Judges. Among these judges were Governor Olene S. Walker, Congressman Jim Matheson, and Judge Andrew Valdez. The panel had the difficult task of selecting a boy and girl national finalist along with runners up.

Utah's winners will participate with other National Finalists at the *Do the Write Thing* National Recognition Ceremony in Washington DC this July. Finalists are scheduled to meet with members of Congress to discuss the problem of youth violence. They will also attend a reception hosted by the Ambassador to the United States for the State of Kuwait. A book containing the student's writings will be placed in the Library of Congress.

Congratulations to all students that took on the Challenge to do something about youth violence!

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

National Finalists

Celia Riveria

**8th Grade, Highland Middle School
Teacher, Kim Hatch**

Nathaniel Gates

**8th Grade, Farrer Middle School
Teacher, Andrea Villegas**

Clelia Rivera • 8th Grade
Highland Middle School • Teacher, Him Hatch

No Longer

I stood there in shadow, watching them dance with death.
Black death sped by me, but missed all the same.
No longer could I stay there and watch
I pulled my courage out and ran to pull the two apart.
You fell off your pedestal with a cold bang
That left you spinning, looking in my eyes
Tearing, fearful to see into yours
Those black pits of the abyss.
I ran out of that room to find comfort from others
Who ran out to clean up the mess.
I found myself and ran back up
To find you in handcuffs and a love hurting
While another broke to pieces on the floor.
Interrogated until I could see no more
And fell tired on a bed while a family broke apart.
No longer do I see you the same.
No longer do I let the fights go unresolved.
No longer am I in your shadow.
No longer am I me.

Life is a struggle with violence all around. I always feel the presence of fear looming over my head as I walk home or in the halls of a school thought to be safe. Life is hard enough without the fear of hearing the dreaded code that tells us it is more dangerous than we thought. An extra burden is added on my shoulders as I worry about my safety of my family and friends. We forget that there is danger in even the littlest of people. They don't have to be big to carry a gun or flaunt a knife in the air. Violence is a

major problem we need to correct.

Violence has ruined a chunk of my childhood. I used to be a carefree kid, never caring about what is in store, just happy picking flamboyant flowers for my mom's hair. In one second, that child was gone. She was a different lifetime, that girl with the dark hair and loving eyes. In one second, I had an adult's burden. My family was broken and I had to find the glue to put it together. Not even super glue worked. There was an empty spot in the home and in my heart. I lost a hero, a person I loved because he decided to let out his anger in unspeakable ways. I was no longer that little angel of joy. I was a witness. You still might see the dark hair and loving eyes as I grow out of childhood, but that is not the real me. I cannot imagine how I used to be.

I still do not know, to this day, what caused so much pain and misery to go on in my home and others. Many reasons are in front of us, but are they the right ones? Maybe this kid did shoot another because of words. Maybe he was mad or hurt. No one can answer it. There are many cases that go unanswered. Words could cause a problem when uttered. Anybody would be hurt when lies were said and everyone avoids you. People like to pick on others to make them feel superior. We can choose what to do: act or walk away. Try to choose the right one when you are in a situation. Don't shorten your life span; stop the violence.

No Longer (Part 2)

No longer am I me, for you caused me so much heartache.
I'm like your shadow, ever drifting from one feeling to the next
Pain, anger, hatred, and hurt.
I tried to be kind, I did what you said
But now I wonder how violent you are.
Did someone say a word that stuck to you like glue?
Or did you need to cause pain to feel?
Were you hit or hurt when I was away?
I'm sorry, I had no clue; don't punish us for what we don't
Say or do to please you.
You're hurt, you're mad, I could see that
As plainly as I see the tear on your cheek.
You're gone because of things I may never know
But you will come back for the memory of me
And try to put death on our door
And add holes in my heart.

Is there any way to stop this madness? Yes, several if we work to purify our country and world. It starts with the most crucial and easiest step: if they shove, don't shove back. Sometimes, people like to say things to me that make me mad. I won't start shoving them or yelling threats. I simply ignore it and walk away. They want to cause violence, don't fall in their hole. Simply walk away. Next, show kindness and others will follow. If you're nice to someone, they will be nice to another. Soon you will have a web of kindness. You don't have to do it alone. Stand up against violence, and it will have no place to hide or inflict fear upon.

No Longer (Part 3)

I will not lie there to rot in your pool of blood.
I will not take the blows or the cuts.
No longer is your nature unknown;
You're violent and cruel
But also dangerous and cunning.
You will not catch us off guard, alone in your world
Now millions will hide in the shadow you love
And keep you in cold bars where you will not come out.
I loved you, no more, not ever again.
I will see that you will never come back
And finish the job.
We will not stand for papers that don't help at all
Or see the ocean become blood or the sky turn black
With your victims screams and your laughter.
We will not tolerate your violence and pain.
We will not let you see the light of day.
You had your shot and lost it too.
You gave away a life, a love
And now you pay, in a silver box
With others like you.

Nathaniel Gates • 8th Grade
Farrer Middle School • Teacher, Andrea Villegas

“Get out of my house!” yelled the drunken father at his son. The angry child glared at his enraged father, his face oozing hatred. “I wouldn’t live under the same roof as you if my life depended on it!” was his reply. Full of violent rage, the boy slammed the door and sprinted away from his childhood home, never to return, determined to take out his problems on the world. This is the scene that takes place in many broken homes. The parental abuse that ruins families not only makes the life of abused children miserable but causes them to lead a violent life. Youth violence has affected my life at school, and even in small cases it can have serious effects. However, there are steps that can be taken to prevent violence, which will keep kids from being affected by it.

Youth violence has many causes. Parental abuse teaches children to be violent; drugs affect the minds of people, inhibiting their decision-making skills. Neglect causes kids to become hardened and cold, and all of these influences have a tendency to cause kids to lead violent lives. Another problem is lack of positive role models among children. If a child’s parents aren’t good examples, he/she will not likely be exposed to appropriate ways of dealing with conflict other than violence. Finally, peer pressure can have a big affect on the lives of youth. Being dependent on your friends is important in that stage of your life, and chances are you’ll do what they’re doing. If they are making bad choices, it is hard to resist them, especially when they start pressuring you. Joining gangs is one of the main reasons kids become violent. Youth join gangs to be with their friends, and if their friends are violent, they will be supported in their violence.

Youth violence has affected me personally. In elementary school, I was bullied. The experience was unpleasant. I didn’t feel like going to school, for fear of being bullied further. Though most bullies are cowards at heart, who desperately attempt to gain power over people, some are strong, who won’t back down if their challenge is accepted. Fearing that was the case, I didn’t confront him. Though I feared him, I tried being his friend, and he in turn became mine. That experience has taught me that some people bully others because they have no friends, and the solution may be to become their friend.

Some people think there is no solution to youth violence, and it’s best to just keep quiet and hope it will stop. That is not true. There are many Solutions to youth violence, and if you keep quiet it will only get worse.

First of all, there are a number of ways you can help prevent youth violence. Supporting community efforts, staying in school, enrolling in after school activities, (like sports, drama, music, etc.,) and encouraging your friends to do so will all decrease the amount of violence affecting your own life. They will also benefit others who are affected by youth violence. Secondly, there are things you can do to end violence in your life. Like I did, you can try to be their friend, or you can talk your problems out, but just trying to avoid it will only further it. If you have been affected by violence on a large scale basis, you may need to enroll in counseling, which will help you straighten your life out. All in all, there are a number of ways to take care of youth violence in your life, so why not take the steps that will lead you to a more peaceful and violence-free life?

In conclusion, many things can be the cause of youth violence, and there are even more ways you can prevent and end it. One should not accept that violence has to be a part of one's life. Although it may seem hard or risky, it is worth it in the end.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
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Runners Up

Annie Sandholtz

**7th Grade, Centennial Middle School
Teacher, Melanie Newbold**

Nic Hanigan

**8th Grade, Provo School District FOCUS
Teacher, Cheryl Thompson**

Annie Sandholtz • 7th Grade
Centennial Middle School • Teacher, Melanie Newbold

I have three little brothers, Coby, Joe and Ben. They love to pretend they are courageous knights or rough pirates; heroes saving the day. Unfortunately, when they are pretending they often fight with each other, physically or verbally. They are just little kids: Where are they picking up all this violence? One place Ben, Joe and Coby learn that violence is okay is from television. Whenever I sit down and actually watch the shows with them, I am appalled at how much fighting there is. The heroes in today's cartoons are almost always involved in violence, whether it be street fights or insult attacks. When my little brothers see Superman hurting his enemies, they think they can do the same to anyone who gets in their way. Often I see Joe just grab a toy from Ben. What does Ben do to get it back? Kick Joe, punch him; pretty soon they are rolling on the floor. When I asked Joe where he learned to punch and kick, he responded, "I am just trying to be like the guys on Star Wars."

My brothers also learn a lot through the example of me and my family. Ben, Joe and Coby think we are the coolest people in the world, beside maybe Superman, so when they see us arguing or yelling at each other they parrot that verbal violence the next time they get the chance. Their insults are astoundingly complex and earnest. Even at such young ages they are widely exposed to the world of violence.

I know that this violence is often a tendency in young kids. However, if a kid is violent in his early years he will have higher chances of being a violent youth, and to take it one step further, a violent adult.

So how can we prevent this violence? If we all take more action in protecting kids against violence, the future generations will be more violence free. Parents should make sure they know what their children are watching on television, and try to avoid

shows and video games that are excessively violent. We should all teach the kids of today to work things out by talking them over, not by using violent actions or words. If we all show them this by doing it ourselves, both they and we will benefit.

Violence begins with anger. If that anger is bottled up too long, or isn't controlled, it turns into violence. Many teenagers feel like they can't confide in anyone. When they can't hold their feelings in any longer, those feelings explode into violent words or actions. It is like shaking up a can of soda; when you finally open the can, it erupts into a fizzy mess. To prevent this effect, parents should spend more time with their kids, and ask them questions. Parents were kids once too, they will understand how their kids feel. I think most parents would be amazed what their kids would tell them if they just asked. Lots of kids today are insecure. They often use violence because it makes them feel powerful. If parents build up their kids, they will become more self – confident and won't have to use violence as an escape route.

When kids are taking their anger out through physical violence, it is often because they aren't physically active in other ways, such as sports, dance, karate, etc.. Studies have shown that the youth of today doesn't get enough exercise. I know that I feel much better after having gone to soccer practice or even after walking home from school. Active teens are healthier, more confident, and less stressed than teens who spend all their time indoors or in front of the TV. They are able to relax at home and school because they have been able to let any physical tension out of their system through exercise.

Violence can be stopped, if parents try to protect their kids against it by spending more time with them and being careful of the media. If teens become more active. We can end violence, and we should.

Nic Hanigan • 8th Grade
Provo School District FOCUS • Teacher, Cheryl Thompson

How Youth Violence Has Affected Me

What is youth violence? Youth violence is anything bad you or someone else does to you that you don't like. Youth violence has affected me in many ways. One way I've been affected is by getting kicked out of main school and put in to the Focus program. Once I was asked by a teacher, "Why do you fight?" We fight for many reasons like: pride or to feel more superior than others around us. We also fight to become popular.

Another way I was affected was that I lived in a wonderful home for ten years and one of my real brothers tried to kill my foster brother. He was sent away to a place where he can't even go to the bathroom without adult supervision. I got removed from the home because when I was younger my foster brother assaulted me and my other three brothers for about three to four years, and nobody knew what was going on. Finally one of my brothers spoke up and the police came and picked me up. Then they took me to a new home with some people that I didn't even know.

I haven't been affected by drugs because I love sports and drugs could affect my interest in sports and I could lose my athleticism. I smoked when I was really little, but I didn't like it so I haven't smoked to this day. So I kind of was affected by drugs for a little while, but the main kind of youth violence I get caught up in is fighting with people my age, mainly my brother. My family has a history of physical violence. My real mother abused me a lot when I was really little. I can't remember anything, I just know what I've been told. I don't know why or how she did it, but I have thirteen scars on my head. My brothers used to fight with me all the time. That made me really mad at them and the world, and then I took my anger out on people smaller and weaker than me.

If someone starts to fight and ends up killing the other person on accident they'll go straight to the detention center, and after that they could go to prison. People say stop the violence, and then they turn around and get violent. Violence would stop if they could stop their own violent acts, then the rest of the world would be one step closer to a violence free world.

When someone gets caught for youth violence and goes to prison or detention they are giving up a lot of good things for only a few things that quite frankly isn't really worth as much as your family or your freedom. When I get in a fight I lose control of my self and have to be stopped or held back so the other person can get away.

All I've got to say is youth violence isn't worth very much and may make your children end up in a foster home or even a group home, and they will move to new homes after one home has had enough of your kids. When you go to see them they either won't remember or they will run and hide, and that way all you get to see is this little kid's frightened face as he runs to his room never to see you or hear from you ever again. I know how it feels being so scared and so hungry that you hide in a garbage can and eat rotten food from it. I also know how it feels not having a caring mom or dad to help you when you're sick, pick you up from school, or take you to and from your friend's house. It really sucks getting your mouth duct taped shut while your mother beats on you because of her bad day at work, or when she sets you in a really hot tub of water and leaves you in there what seems like forever.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

State Finalists

Brad Collins

**8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Chris Cannon**

Lynn Katoa

**8th Grade, Focus Provo School District
Teacher, Cheryl Thompson**

Tamirrah Cox

**8th Grade, Ephraim Middle School
Teacher, Shannon Sorenson**

Kori Martin

**7th Grade, Ephraim Middle School
Teacher, Barbara Wintch**

Shawnae Grover

**7th Grade, Focus Provo School District
Teacher, Cheryl Thompson**

Harrison Richards

**7th Grade, Centennial Middle School
Teacher, Melanie Newbold**

Eric Schwaar

**7th Grade, Eisenhower Middle School
Teacher, Mary Alsop**

Brad Collins • 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School • Teacher, Chris Cannon

Violence Not Needed

Youth violence is a very big in the United States of America. When I first started this essay my history teacher asked me a question about violence. He said, "Do you think that humans are born with the natural instinct to be violent or do you think that you receive violence through a period of time?" If you think about it you must be aggressive in life to get what you want, because every thing is not just going to be given to you. Many youth confuse being aggressive in their determination to succeed with using violence to get what they want. You must work hard and be persistent. But you don't need to be violent. We need to learn to use our own talents and abilities to succeed. We need to establish our sense of self worth at a young age so we can rely on the strength of our own choices and decisions when faced with the challenges we have as youth today. We are not born violent. We are born innocent and pure. I believe the level of violence we attain has a great deal to do with the level we are exposed to as a child. Through media, television, video games and many other avenues the threat of violence creeps into our homes, schools and into our lives each day. Children who are exposed to violent material and situations each day learn to be violent. They see the victor portrayed as the violent aggressive hero and they are led to believe to get what you want you must be like them. Kindness, compassion and empathy for the situations of others are portrayed as weak and unworthy of the admiration and recognition received by the violent person. Youth violence normally occurs by not having enough knowledge about the problem or not knowing the person's intentions. Someone says something that offends the other person and it just keep's building to where they are treating each other unfairly. Other youth get

involved and spur on the already hurt feelings to a higher level. There seems to be no knowledge of how to communicate effectively. Or more important no desire. They think it can be settled with a car smashed or a fight after school or some other form of intimidation that seems easier than talking it out. Some times it even leads to an angered student bringing a gun to school. Youth violence has effected many lives. I believe after you experience something with youth violence you tend to think more about people's look's instead of what's inside of them. Like that person dresses different than me or that person has a few earrings so you think he must be a rough or mean. But you really don't even know much about that person at all. You tend to loose the ability to look for the good in everybody. You become wary and unable to trust the honest actions of others. A way to help try and stop youth violence is thinking before you react. Thinking what if I was in that person's shoes? Try getting to know them maybe you can help them or they can help you. Violence has effected my life because I use to think that I would never get into a fight. But one day, as I saw a smaller boy being humiliated and picked on I decided that it would be better to help him than to stand by and watch. I believed I could help him without violence. Unfortunately the others didn't share my ideas. For them there was only that one solution, to fight and prove me wrong. After that I started to think a little more about fights and people and the way I acted as well as the way that other people around me acted. I believe that if we can learn to look for the good in others, be positive in our attitude towards life, develop our own self worth, and keep violence out of our homes and schools we will develop into a more caring people. We can be a people who can learn to replace violence with compassion, aggression with kindness, and hostility with empathy.

Then there will be no need for violence.

Tamirrah Cox • 8th Grad
Ephraim Middle School • Teacher, Shannon Sorensen

“Maybe”

If people only knew the pain I go through.
Maybe they would not do the things they do.
Maybe they would understand, just like you.
Maybe they would not treat me like they do.
Maybe they don't mean the things they say.
Or don't mean to push me away.
Maybe they don't mean the shove.
Maybe they don't mean to tug.
Maybe they don't mean to make me drop my books.
Maybe they don't even mean to give me dirty looks.
But they do these things,
And I can't explain
I have to do something
I'm going insane.
I keep telling myself, “It's not wrong.”
People do it every day.
But this madness has to end.
It's getting old cutting myself over and over again.
I'm going to break,
this risk I'm willing to take,
the images running through my head,
when I lay there in bed.
It's like it will make it all better.
Just a short drop then a sudden stop,
Or swimming under water till I can go no farther,
Or maybe if I just pulled the trigger.
Maybe if I ran away,
Or hid till another day.
If it would just all end I would never have to go through it again.
That's it my minds made up
It's all going to stop.
It might not have to end like this,
If people would have smiled
or stopped to talk for a little while.
Maybe if people cared just like you
My life would not have to be through
If they said, “Hi”
Or waved when they went by.

Maybe if they just gave me a chance
Maybe if they knew.
If they only knew what I go through.
I try one more day
That one last day
The day you take my hand
And told me all about your plan.
“We are going to have a sleep over”
You say
One person out of a million that cares
One person that would miss me
If I had one last wish it would be,
You would come and die with me,
And hold my hand ever so tightly,
I go home and get it all ready,
I put my stuff on my desk and write a note.
Mom
It's not your fault
Don't feel sad
You're the best thing I ever had
My life was just so bad
I sign my name at the With Lots of Love
And wish I could give her one last hug
I make a will and put it on the table
The one last thing I write down is everything That's my favorite
I read my favorite poem
and say a silent prayer
I lick my lips and put on my dress
I hold my breath
And take a step
A short drop and a sudden stop
Was the way I went.
Maybe if my life weren't so bad
and I looked at everything I ever had
Maybe if I thought people cared
Or even if they did not stare.
This life I lived for just 14 years
Had brought lots of heartache and tears
It's like it tears my heart in two.

Wishing I could be something like you.
The pain is gone.
My last thoughts were thinking of you.
I let myself go
Go away from the misery
Go away from the pain
Go away from everything I used to know.
If people only knew
The things I went through
If people weren't so verbally violent
If they took time to care
Instead of spitting nasty words.
If they could only understand
They could save a life or two
And who knows I may be talking to you.
So next time you walk by,
Just stop and say hi,
It may just save someone's life.
So hold on just one more day,
So just take the time,
And fight against youth violence.

Shawnae Grover • 7th Grade
Provo School District FOCUS • Teacher, Cheryl Thompson

Youth violence is contagious just like a cold, and violence has been a big part of my life my mom met this guy at a bar jay was her old boy friend. Lets start out with my mom her name is shawna and she has been abused twice well actually second time was me at the and time she did drink and do drugs, And drugs screw up your life especially if you have kids. Believe me because I am one of those kids any way see my mom got into drugs plus if that wasn't bad enough he would beat her until the point where she looked like she was going to die even sometimes he would beat her to where she couldn't move or sometimes even breathe then some times he would even come after me then the last time that he did come after me he kicked me down about ten cement stairs and knocked me out and every single day it would get worse when he drank to the point where I really thought that she was going to die and even one time I even called nine one one and even when he didn't drink his rages got out of hand. Then when he got my mom into drugs she got really really REALLY messed up in the head to the point where she even paid a tenth to me and she would always bring guys home with her even one she didn't know but she didn't care they just keep coming. The drugs also made me go to a foster home and made her go to jail I still don't think that drugs was worth that much well then again it's her life. Ever since then I have been to about 12 foster homes but that's including shelter homes The scariest thing that I am going to tell you about is kind of personal but I am going to tell you it is called sexual abuse that is what happened to me. His name was Joe and he was 67 years old and he raped me see he was my neighbor and one day my friend and I were playing football and the football went in to his yard and well that's all I'm going to tell you because I haven't even told my therapist even that much yet. And ever since that happened well see I dress like a boy and the truth is I don't know why my aunt says it's because of what you did. Hear this VIOLENCE IS NOT THE SOLUTION TO YOUR PROBLEMS! you can not stop all the violence around you and make a difference. And if you keep trying you can probably have your friend too quit being violent is just like cheating on a math test or on a spelling test or a art test the point is where you going to get any where in life by being violent I mean you may end up in d.t. then by the time you are eighteen you can go to prison I mean my sister got eight years for being violent it isn't worth it think before you act if you can't do it for your friends and family do it for yourself. Youth violence is drugs, fighting, sexual assault, drinking and abuse How can you stop violence you may be asking yourself well you can't stop all the violence in the world like the war is still going on you can't stop that but you can stop yourself and you just might make a difference whether you believe it or not I think that I should not see because I did I made a difference to all of my friends they copyed me and did what I did see violence has affected my life in

so many ways to the point that i would be being vilant see with was very rong
cause i swore to my self a long time ago that i would never grow up to be like
my stupid father cause i hate so bad the worst feling had growining up to be
like to be just like him any way please dont use vilance seee using vialance is
just like cheting on a test you wont get any wear in life.

Lynn Katoa • 8th Grade
Provo School District FOCUS • Teacher Cheryl Thompson

Do The Write Thing

What is violence? Violence is not just fighting or doing bad things. No, violence can be a variety of things. It can be poverty, family problems, involvement in gangs, sexual assault, and the media. These are some of the problems we have in the world and we should work on them. They are the issues that make youth and grown ups violent or it is them not being rash and just being stupid.

Life where I grew up was kind of difficult. I always saw my parents fighting and then the next day they acted like nothing happened. When I was 7 years old, my parents divorced and it was hard for me to handle. I felt mad at my mom for being so selfish and for not thinking about us kids even though I knew my parents would not make it. It was a turning point for me and I began to sluff school and not listen to my teacher because I had so much going on in my life. I would go home and my mom would give me a spanking so I would not do it again. I would turn around and do it again and my mom would spank me even harder and harder. I would be mad at her but I learned she loved me and spanked me because she loved me and if she didn't do it I would get more out of control. If she hadn't done this, she would not have been a good mother. There would be no structure in our house.

When I was 10, my old dad came and got me in Utah and took me in the summer to live in Texas. When I lived there it was nice and I liked to the school and stayed out of trouble. Sometimes I hung out with friends and liked to play basketball. When I got midpoint through school I started to get in trouble and I didn't care. My mom wanted me to come back to Utah but I wanted to stay. I changed my mind when I was 14 and went back and started gang banging because I wanted to be known and hang out in groups and just chill. I would get drunk, go to parties, get into fights and just cause trouble. I had to go and put dirt in my gang and prove myself, that I was down and would do anything.

One day I got in trouble and went to detention and had to stay there for a couple of months. I got sent to other programs and got kicked out and had to go back. I learned my lesson and was sent to Provo so I would not get in trouble with the law anymore. I was put in a good proctor family and started to slow down and live life like a teenager and not like a 21 year old. I actually began going to school which I used to never do. I just chill out and let trouble come to me instead of go looking for it. I really learned my lesson and know what will happen to me if I keep living in the system. I know if I keep doing those bad behaviors that I will end up in DT and back in the system again. It is not worth it.

Why do kids become violent? In my situation it is because I was in a gand and I had to much stress. I can stop violence by getting help for myself and others. When I was growing up I always wanted to kill myself because things weren't going well for me. I was depressed and stressed out. I now know we can help others by bringing them into programs and giving them the chance and skills to grow and change. I want to change and be successful. I want to do good in school and make a difference. If everyone made an effort this would make the world a little better. I know I can not stop all the violence in the world but by me and other people trying to change the world will be a better place and we can live better lives. I know I have been violent and I know I have problems. I also know that I can go and can help others who are struggling. I can tell them they are not the only ones who are struggling so they won't feel so lonely and suicidal.

Kori Martin • 7th Grade
Ephraim Middle School • Teacher, Barbara Wintch

I know

I know a girl who was abused her mother never married just kept having kids.

This girl was the oldest of 4 other kids and this girl felt it was her job to take care of her brothers and sisters.

she cooked, cleaned, changed diapers and every thing else a parent was supposed to do but she wasent a parent. This families kids were always sick and never got shots, this girl and her siblings were whipped with belts, willows, and spanked plus lots more.

One time her and her siblings had there mouths, feet, And hands duct taped. Lots of bad things happened to her and her brothers and sisters because of drugs and violence her sister almost died because of drugs.

This girl can still remember when they came to take her and her siblings because someone had seen her mom banging her head against the car. They took her and her 2 brothers Chance and Michele and her baby sister brekale to the hospital.

She still remembers the long hours of being scared and not knowing what was going to happen she having just turned 5 years old was asked if her mom had ever hurt her and answering truthfully she said yes! the girl watched her mother being led away by two policemen. She knew right then she might never see her mother again her and the girls siblings feel asleep crying and clutching each other.

In the morning she was taken away from her brothers and sisters only one came with her! she remember the long 2 hour ride with the guy named blaze and her brother. This guy took her and her brother to this really big house blaze left them with this family they were scared to death of every thing.

soon after a couple years had passed her brother went with a different family. This girl had to be on a lot of medication and help.

She is now allot beater but still has to have help. she has been through more than imaginable. She still keeps in contact with her 4 siblings, violence has ruined her life forever all though she is improving. Just know that violence dosent do anything good at all, this girl is me I know what it is like and what it does to you.

I can remember it like it happened yesterday my own sister dosen't even reamber me cause she was just a baby. And I wish we could all be together but that is not possible I still cry, I still reamber, I can still see our faces.

The family I am with has helped me and I love them dearly..

I just dont fit in I try to be like
everybody else but im not im different and I cant
change the past but I can change the future.
Most people think they've got it the worst but
you dont.

I have one thing to ask and that is in a poam
so..

Keep my past keep my soul the only reason
I wrote this is cause for the first time I wanted
someone to now.

Harrison Richards • 7th Grade
Centennial Middle School • Melanie Newbold

Youth Violence and the Media

Youth violence is destructive because it causes pain to innocent people and, in turn, may cause the victim of violence to act violent to himself or other people. Most violence can be linked to family, media, or drugs. However, it seems in this day and age that most violence is blamed on the media and, in particular, video games.

Is the media really the problem? There may be violent shows, games, and music that talks about violence, but people really cannot be quick to say, "George watched *The Matrix* yesterday and then went and killed someone. It must be the movie's fault." I know *The Matrix* is supposedly where the Columbine kids got their "idea" from, but each kid also had a pre-violence issue which was never taken serious by parents, friends, or teachers. What about the kids that got grounded from their X-Box and killed their parents? Could it really have been the game's fault or could their violence be blamed on something else? The game wasn't saying, "Go kill your parents." The parents let the kids play and get the games.

Violence begins at home. I had an experience where my friend shot my sister's friend in the arm with a plastic BB gun after playing a video game that involved shooting aliens. At first, it looks like it was all the games fault, but the sad thing is, it can't totally be blamed on one thing. My friend's brother is mean to him, and it doesn't sound like his dad knows or does anything about it. So the first part of this problem is family. Second, he was obviously not able to make good judgment between game and real life. He just casually walked off and did not take responsibility for his actions. They say that constructive violence like hitting a pillow may relieve stress. But in time, will the person choose to punch a real person instead of the pillow? Is it the same with video games? Could my friend have played the video game out of anger instead of fun so his frustration merged shooting aliens with a little girl about eleven? No one knows what he was thinking, but the point is it's not as simple as saying that it's all the video games fault. The world was violent and children killed their parents well before video games.

Maybe it's time to not find a scapegoat for everything. The media is a scapegoat for violence as much as McDonald's is for obesity. Did McDonald's force food down people's throats? Who bought the food? Who bought the game? Who gave the kids the money? The point is violence will only stop when parents control the amount of time that is spent playing game and what games they play, and when the kids learn the difference between fiction and reality. People also need to take responsibility for their own actions and stop trying to find scapegoats. Only then can answers be found and not blurred. Like rock music in the 70's, video games have become a scapegoat.

Eric Schwaar • 7th Grade
Eisenhower Jr. High • Teacher. Mary Alsop

YOUTH VIOLENCE

Violence. it's a part of all our lives. It's on the street, it's in our schools, and it might even be in your home. And it's not just adults; it's the youth as well. It affects each and every one of us. Everything around us influences us to do something; we may even be influenced to do violence. But, we all need to do something about reducing violence, or it will become overwhelming. We all need to learn about youth violence so we can do something to improve the state of this issue.

My life is full of many things and the violence around is trying to penetrate all the good in my life. I hear of fights in the halls, drive-by shootings and bullies just add more. I don't want to hear the bad, but it gets to my ears anyway. The youth are getting worse and worse it seems. Kids are getting beat up for all kinds of reasons and drivers are being shot for no reason. The older are picking on the younger like myself. I have had bullies push me around and even hurt me at school. Even the little things like a shove or a poke is mean. The violence they do just adds to their "self-esteem". They know they can do the little things, so they can try the bigger things like physically injuring or even turning to guns. Bullies just don't know when to stop. I don't like what they do. However, every now and then, I want to do what they do. But I don't want others to feel what I have felt. That would make me violent.

Like I said earlier, there are lots of things that may influence us to do violence. Our own parents are a huge influence to how much violence we have and do in our lives. Many teens have learned its O.K. to be violent because their parents are violent to each other or even to them. Kids have also learned the ways of violence from things like video games. All of the "cool" games are games like Mortal Combat and 007 shoot 'em up games. Youth have learned that it's O.K. to kill and have always known there is a reset button. But there is no reset button in real life. People need to stop hurting and killing. One of the biggest ways the youth learn that violence is O.K. is by watching TV programs and movies. They're just as bad, if not worse than, video games. They show *real* people that are violent. Then kids may think that violent people are cool. Everything in the world just sounds so terrible.

It sounds like I can't change anything, but I can. I can stop myself from becoming violent. I can stay away from these violent games. I can choose not to watch those bad movies. I can even encourage my parents and siblings not to be violent. But I can't *make* anyone stop being violent. What I can do is report violence before it gets bad. Then those who can stop others will help. I still wish I could stop it all.

There is much violence in our world today. It affects my life as a youth in many ways. People around me encourage others to be violent. It is also the everyday things like TV, movies, and video games that have affected them. The everyday things are still out to get you. But I know we all can stop all of this if we try. Let's work together, hand in hand, to make this world a better, safer place to live in.

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