
UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Student Writings
2007

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO DO THE WRITE THING

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Do the Write Thing 2007 VIP Judges

Heather Anderson

Miss Utah, USA

Bonnie Jean Beesley

Beesley Foundation

Laurie Hart

Callister, Nebeker & McCullough

Christine Kearn

Utah Deputy for Education

Billy Schuffenhauer

Olympic Silver Medalist

Jack Stewart

Real Salt Lake

Judge Andrew Valdez

Third District Juvenile Court

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

Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley
Foundation

Kuwait-America Foundation

Law Firm of Callister, Nebeker &
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Marion Mattingly, Executive Director
National Campaign to Stop Violence

Zions Bank

UTAH'S SEVENTH 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, which 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 violence that destroys so many young lives. The program works because it recognizes that the best solutions come from communities where 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, 2002. The Board is also responsible for administering more than \$1,000,000 in juvenile justice funds aimed at filling gaps in the continuum of juvenile justice services, from prevention to treatment. Members are appointed by Utah's Governor.

How the Campaign Works

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice sent information 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 course work. 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 2,100 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence. More than 1,100 chose to write, with over 600 submitting essays for review. Students from the University of Utah and Weber State University participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top ninety writings. The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice then selected the top twelve finalists, whose work was forwarded to Utah's VIP Judges. The VIP Judges had the difficult task of selecting a boy and girl national finalist along with runners up.

Utah's first place winners will participate with other National Finalists at the *Do the Write Thing* National Recognition Ceremony in Washington DC this July. Finalists will meet with members of Utah's Congressional delegation 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 the Challenge to do something about youth violence!

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

National Finalists

Kelsea Jackson

*8th Grade, Morgan Middle School
Teacher, Heather Luff*

Jose Perez

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

Kelsea Jackson - 8th Grade
Morgan Middle School - Teacher, Heather Luff
I Can Change the World

Violence is a horrible thing, and it is not only physical. There are many different types of it, such as: dating violence, gang violence, physical abuse, verbal abuse, and emotional abuse. It can hurt you in so many ways that you can't even imagine. It will abolish your self-esteem, little by little, until finally, you feel as if you're an outcast, with no one to turn to, and that there is no hope for the future. There's another side to it too. It's when you choose to bully, abuse, and degrade, because you feel that if you can degrade someone else it might make you feel more important. You might even be under the impression that you're even happy, but when you think about it, you are only lying to yourself. I have been on both sides looking in, and I know how it feels. I know the pain when you're being abused. You feel as if you're falling deeper and deeper into a bottomless, black pit, with nowhere to turn to for help. I also know how it feels when you think so little of yourself, that possibly, trying to make other's feel the same way just might make you feel better inside. We might also do this because we are going through a hard time ourselves, and we don't know any other way to relieve our sorrow, other than to take it out on others.

It all started in the fifth grade. At the first of the year, I felt confident, and happy, and it was as if nothing stood between my dreams and me. I only had a few friends, but that was fine. I was sure that they were true friends, so I figured that they were better than a million. However, that's where I went wrong. They began excluding me from the group, and they weren't counting me in on group activities, conversations, and everything in general. They began talking behind my back, and whispering about me even when I was around. Something that happened to me I'll never forget, was one day at lunch. I went to sit where I always sat, which was next to them. Just then, one of them turned to me and said, "Why do you still sit with us? You're not our friend anymore." I just sat there, staring intently at my food, wishing them away. When that happened, it was as if something inside me died. I no longer cared about what I did, how I looked, or even how I was doing in school. After that, I couldn't find the courage to make new friends from fear of rejection, and my self-esteem took a plummeting crash. If only to make things worse, I was having major family issues. Not even my family would give me the respect I deserved. It was as if their only goal in life was to degrade and harass me. I felt as though I was standing in the middle of a room screaming at the top of my lungs, but no one would even bother to look up.

I did find a way to subside the pain. I started to bully others, through verbal violence, because I was able to feel for at least one brief moment,

satisfaction in knowing that I was able to make someone feel less than they really were. I didn't bully everyone all the time. Only a derogatory statement here and there, but it certainly made an impact. I remember one time, when I was verbally abusing someone, and then, one of my classmates turned to me and said, "Why are you doing that? It's called being a bully, gosh!" but I ignored it, because I was "too good" to listen. However, he was the cool one to do what he knew what was right.

It took me a year until I finally got the hint. I finally realized, as I hesitated, that I really wasn't happy, but miserable. Then, the new year rolled along, and I looked at it as a new beginning. A new beginning to improve the mistakes I made the previous year. A new beginning to try a different outlook on life. To breathe life in and to taste it to its ever sweetness. I knew I could change. I could be the sort of person that could be friends with everyone. I could be the sort of person that loves each individual for his or hers unique and wonderful qualities.

Like I said, I have been on both sides looking in, and I have seen violence and bullying from both perspectives. I know what it's like to bully, and I know what it's like to have to live through out each day with violence. I will help prevent bullying. Several ways I will do so, is I will be a friend to everyone. I will stick up for those that undergo violence, and I will befriend them as well. I will talk to everyone. I will be cheerful and optimistic, and just maybe, cheer and optimism will rub off onto the world. Maybe others will befriend those people that are going through some hard times as well. Every action towards another will help the world become a better place.

I know what it's like to be degraded every day. I know the feeling of agony you experience when it's almost as if your life is falling apart. I know how low you can feel to want to make others feel the same. However, that really doesn't make you happy. I am happy, because I take every opportunity I get to uplift others and make them feel of the precious worth that they really are. I love the look in their eyes when they realize that someone really does care about them. By doing one of these simple, yet incredible acts, it will increase their self-esteem. Very possibly, they will remember what it was like when you did something for them, and they will do it for others. It will work as a tree, until, finally, the whole world will be involved. I can change the world!

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

--Mahatma Gandhi

Jose Perez - 8th Grade
Highland Middle School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

I Felt Nothing

he talks to himself as if no one is there.

Everyone tries to stay out of his way.

Tries to avoid him.

I Felt Nothing

To not have conversations with him.

Maybe we think we are too good for him.

That's what we see when he is just kicking back.

I Felt Nothing

Drunken man in our house.

Nothing but complete chaos.

he made us stay up late

I Felt Nothing

Music loud, pounding off the walls

Nights he almost kicked down my bedroom door

Fights with my mom

I Felt Something

I remember crying,

Wish I was flying,

Flying away from this house

These stories in me...

I remember lying in bed

Pillow over my head

Trying to block the noise, the yells, the crying.

Now I notice I felt everything but happiness.

These are the things I had to deal with because of violence. I always called her the violence machine when I was a little kid. I especially remember when I was about eight years old and my mom and dad were fighting again like usual. My dad wanted to hit my mom because he was drunk and my mom wanted to go to the store and buy something to eat for my sisters. He beat her and I was there right in front of them and I experienced something that still bothers me. Before my dad moved out of the house something bad happened also. He was drunk and my mom was crying so I was already mad at him. She told me that he was trying to hit her so that's when I got mad and I went to my dad and started yelling at him he just pushed me onto the ground and my mom came and tried to hit him and I got up and got between both of them and I got hit on the forehead because he tried hitting my mom who is taller than me so that's why only got hit there. Then I was on the ground crying and my mom was getting beat. I noticed that we were going to get hit really bad but then my sister came and my dad won't hit my sister so we just got into the room and waited for someone to come and the good news is that police officer came (our next door neighbor called the police because she heard yells and cries) and my dad was taken to jail for child abuse and also for hitting my mom and that was the last time I have ever seen my dad. Hopefully I won't see him again.

Youth violence is always bad no matter what and if you have experienced it in your life than that is what causes violence not radios, movies, or anything. I watch TV and I never want to go hit people I watch a lot of movies and that also doesn't make me want to hit anybody but watching my dad hit my mom that did make me want to beat up my dad for all the things he has done. We should stop youth violence by sticking up for people who really need it and not judging people for any reason. Get help if you are dealing with a violent person in your home and help others with the same problem. Help violence stop so we could live happier and be free. People should never have to deal with any thing involving violence because violence is just something people do when they are bored or want to be cool around their friends. I have a lot of friends, but never bullied anybody to get friends I just act like myself and if they want to be my friend then okay but I will never bully for a dumb reason like friendship. What I mean by friendship is some cool kids are bullying some kid and some other kid hits that kid to be part of the group. It is wrong to bully and I will stick up for people that are being bullied for life because if I am ever bullied I would want someone to do the same thing so will help the kids that don't have a person next to them to help them. Every kid should have the right to go anywhere without people making them feel sad because they have nothing better to do besides be mean to others just to make friends so I will always be a good friend and let people have their freedom. I am going to stop youth violence.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Runners Up

Andrea Cutler

8th Grade, Centerville Junior High
Teacher, Thomas D. Lacy

Keagan Mataele

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Chris Cannon

Andrea Cutler - 8th Grade
Centerville Junior High - Teacher, Thomas D. Lacy

Hope of the Future: My Duty to the World

Violence, violence everywhere,
In the news and in the air.

Radios blare of hate and war,
And the families that they've tore.

Scary things are happening. I'm not sure I'm safe.
My mother says that I'll be okay, if I keep my faith.

Now I'm wondering in the night,
If the world has lost it's light.

Families are poor and parents scream,
And slowly each child loses their dream.

Teenagers turn to evil and crime,
Trying to find something to pass the time.

Drugs and Alcohol spread all around,
To teens, these things are most easily found.

Videogames and Halo teach them to kill,
Beer and crack take away their will.

Suddenly they're in and out of jail,
And pass these traits onto their children as well.

Generations through, this cycle is going,
Nothing, it seems, can keep it from slowing.

With so many things, fighting against them,
Is there an answer or even a theorem?

Teach them of hope of love and light,
To learn from each other and do what is right.

Crime and fights will not solve the past,
Only forgiveness can end pain at last.

Most of all, they need to know that they are of worth,
That this world needs them, they can't just surf.

“But what is my job?” I wonder aloud,
“What can I do that will make people proud?”

“How can I help and make teens see,
That they are important to you and to me?”

“Be an example,” came the well thought reply.
Maybe they won’t notice, but I can only try.

Be thoughtful, be kind, be considerate and true,
And maybe others will follow me too.

If I stay away from evil and crime,
Teen violence might end, in time.

Better society by being a friend,
And goodness will win in the end.

Now I lay with my thoughts calm and still,
And smile at the hope of the future we have to fill.

Reference:

Kelly, S. (2006). *Study: Violent video game effects linger in brain*. Retrieved January 18, 2007, from the Yahoo Website:
http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/reuters/061128/tecnology/tech_videogames_brain_col

Keagan Mataele - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

Youth Violence

I have been given the opportunity to write a paper for the “Do the Write Thing” contest. In this world there is so much violence. In 2003 5,570 young people from the ages of 10-24 were murdered at an average of 15 a day. Of these victims 82% were killed with firearms. (www.CDC.gov/ncipc/factsheets/yvfacts.htm) We all can prevent this fatal cause. I personally could try better in preventing others and myself from causing contention and violence. If we honestly ask ourselves, “How does violence start?” it is most likely from teasing or bullying. According to statistics, violence begins at around the ages of 12-24. The reason for this, I believe, is around that age of youth hormones begin to kick in and teenagers don’t know how to deal with it. Because of this they start to act different in order to fit into a “group”. I myself have gone through this stage, and am still going through it.

Some of the people who can’t deal with this starts to make fun of other youth to make themselves feel better. The truth of the matter is it’s not making life easier; it’s just stirring up anger among the victims who are being made fun of. All this does is make a never-ending cycle of violence and contention because one kid wanted to feel good about himself. He wanted to make himself look big, tough and cool among his peers. Because of this one kid there is violence going around the entire school. Youth violence has affected my life tremendously. When I was younger, there were some kids who were about 2 years older than me. They thought they were the kings of the school. Every day I would have to deal with their tormenting and teasing. By the time I was their age, I would be a jerk to the kids who were younger than me. Yes, it’s true; I was also a cause of my school’s violence. I soon found out that it did not make me happy. All it did was make me miserable and upset. Another reason I stopped teasing the younger children is because I thought back to when I was made fun of and how sad I always was, how much hate was built up inside me. I looked into one of the smaller child’s eyes and saw the pain, fear and hatred that was once inside me. Ever since I have been trying to be the solution, not part of the problem.

As you may know, teenagers are now smoking and drinking at a young age. The cause for this is probably because of peer pressure, or lack of love and respect in the youth's household. I heard this story about some scientists doing a test to see if love and compassion can make someone healthy. For two weeks they paid attention to, and played with a little puppy. For another two weeks they completely ignored the puppy. After each period of testing the scientists took a piece of the puppy's bone to see how healthy it was. The conclusion was, on the weeks when the dog wasn't being loved or noticed, the bone was very weak and unhealthy. My point to this is, to let parents who don't treat their children like they should know that they themselves are also causing youth violence. For example, a teenager lives in a home with constant swearing and fighting among the parents and children. The teenager's parents might say that he is not good enough at this or that or doesn't do anything right. Hence, the teenager has picked up some new traits. As he goes to school the next day he starts saying these things to his peers. These inappropriate actions may aggravate his peers and stir them up to anger. Thus we have a brawl waiting to happen.

On the other hand, peer pressure is a huge factor of youth violence. Teenagers get drunk, or high, or whatever they call it, and act completely dim-witted. Once they are high they don't exactly know what they are doing, so they do the most brainless things such as hurting themselves and others. I would think that after most teens aren't high anymore, or how do you say on a "hangover," they feel ridiculous about the imperceptive choice of choosing to be that dull minded.

I will now conclude my paper trying to be one of the many voices in preventing youth violence. The three top causes are: peer pressure, bullying/teasing and finally, compassion and love at home. And always remember that even if you aren't causing youth violence, you can most definitely find some way to prevent it.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

State Finalists

Adriana Aparicio

8th Grade, Highland Middle School
Teacher, Kim Irvine

Noelle Strehlow

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Chris Cannon

Taylor Batchelor

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Chris Cannon

McKayla Thompson

8th Grade, Box Elder Middle School
Teacher, Rob Thomas

Kody Christian

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Chris Cannon

Kekaliloa Vuna

8th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda L. Lujan

Allen Fowles

8th Grade, Ephraim Middle School
Teacher, Shannon Eicher

Brandon Webb

8th Grade, South Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Natalie Bowen

Adriana Aparicio - 8th Grade
Highland Middle School - Teacher, Kim Hatch Irvine

A Cry for Help

She screamed in horror.
What was I to do?
I was the oldest of 4
Only 8 years old
The youngest only 2
The 3 of us crying in horror
As we watched him beat her
With his bare hands
The only thing I could do was watch
I grabbed my brother and sister
And ran as fast as I could
I gave my baby sister to my brother
And I ran and locked the door so they wouldn't see
See, what I had seen my whole life "Violence"
I could hear screaming
With every scream
My heart beat faster and faster
I had never seen him so angry
Her screams muffled by her tears
Under a cloud of fear
With every tear that dropped from her face
My heart dropped farther and farther down
I had to do something
So ran and grabbed the phone
And dialed 9-1-1
Some lady answered
Crying with fear
I told her what was happening
She told me to calm down
She said someone was on their way
I hung up
Who was on their way?
All I knew was that someone was coming
I could hear him hitting her
Like a stormy, thunder filled night
That's how I felt "cold"
My heart was so cold. I hated him
Why did she let him do this?
Why did she put up with it?
Why didn't she take us and run?

Why didn't she tell someone?
I had a lot of questions
But not a lot of answers
What was taking them so long?
15 minutes passed and

Nobody

I heard the door slam
I opened the door to the room
So there was only a crack to see from
I saw my mom on the floor
Blood everywhere
He was gone
I ran out to check on my mom
Black and blue
She had bruises everywhere
For a moment I thought she was dead
She wasn't breathing
We all crowded around her crying with hatred and fear
We put a towel on her to keep her warm
1 minute and it was drenched with blood
I heard the door slam
He was back
We sat there with fear
I had never seen my brother and sister so scared
I could see the fear in their eyes
His footsteps getting closer and closer
All of a sudden he reached down
Grabbed my brother
And threw him
"No," I yelled with fear and hatred
He kicked me as hard as he could
I screamed
I flew with the baby in my arms
I covered her head so she wouldn't get hit
I got up hurt, limping I think I twisted my ankle
I put my baby sister in her crib
And ran to check on my brother and sister
They were huddled in a corner crying
Fear, hatred, sorrow running through their eyes
I took them to the room with my little sister
And locked the door
I had to do something

I ran out limping, my dad still hitting her
I grabbed the closest thing I could see and I hit him
He fell with a thud
It broke my heart to do it but I had to do
What I had to do to protect her
Right then the door swung open
The police got there
They arrested him
And took my mom to the hospital
It hurt so bad to watch them take him
He was arrested for 7 years
Behind cold, bloody bars
We lived with our grandparents
Me, my two sisters, my brother, and my mom
Two years later my mom remarried
To a man that cares about her a lot
And would never hurt her
When you look into her eyes
You could see how much happier she is
She can laugh, smile and much more now
But you could still see the sadness and sorrow in her eyes
Till this day I still have nightmares about it
My brothers and sisters still cry in their sleep
But in time it will all get better
When he got out he went to counseling
He won't even hurt a fly now
And he regrets everything
Yet I'll never know
I think that he did what he did
Because he was beaten when he was little
He let everything bottle up inside
And he got to the point where he just took out his anger on her
You can never pay the price for violence.
Violence should be something not seen or done.

Taylor Batchelor - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

I WILL RAISE MY VOICE

I may still be young in age, but I know firsthand the impact of violence. And I believe that violence in our youth today is caused by multiple factors. Yes, I am only thirteen years of age, but I can raise my voice against youth violence and be a voice for a better society and a better future for myself, my peers, and generations to follow.

Violence affects countless young people on a daily basis, and I am counted among them. My personal story of violence involved a parent who became addicted to an illegal drug and became very abusive to my mom, my infant brother, and me. I was three years-old when the violence began, and the effects will last a lifetime. I can choose to put those memories of the experiences I encountered to use in either a negative or a positive way. Either way, I have to deal with what happened, so I choose to come out on the positive side.

Violence in youth and in society seems to be raging out of control. Each day, the media shows and tells violent stories more vivid than the day before. We are spreading negativity faster than bacteria. In many areas there is hatred and violence towards anyone who is different than us, either racially, economically, socially, or even towards those individuals with handicaps. We seem to have become a selfish world, caring only about money and doing whatever it takes to get it, even if it's criminal. Drug use is an epidemic, as cheap drugs are easily available to youth everywhere. Some kids will even resort to violence just to be cool, and bullying kids can turn into killing kids by the ones who are getting bullied. Entire countries are at war. Terrorists are invading our country. And worst of all, families continue to experience violence internally. We have children without mothers, babies without fathers, and families coming apart at the seams.

Changing the course of violence will not be easy, but it is possible. I can make a difference through my personal actions and decisions. I can start small and simple by being a friend to those in need of one. My mom always says, "If you want to have a friend, be a friend." I can aim to be a leader among my peers. Instead of trying to be cool by bullying others, I will commit to do the opposite and to step in and stop bullying when I see it. I will do my part to be involved. If each of us had this attitude, what a change we could make. We have to practice what we preach.

We may all have been touched by violence in one way or another, whether on a large or small scale, and we all have to choose how we respond to that experience. I choose to be a leader for stopping violence. I choose to look within myself and overcome what has occurred in my own life and use it for good. Everyone is a someone; sometimes it's just hard to find who that someone is in you. I will Raise My Voice.

Kody Christian - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

A Problem We Can Fix

“Were the same as the wild animals in the jungle! Violence, it’s a part of human nature”! Many people say this about violence. Many people think that violence is just a part of human nature. No, eating is a part of human nature. There are many ways to stop from going violent although some of them may be considered “childish” but they work nonetheless. Some as simple as counting backwards slowly from ten, to just taking some deep breaths, but that is only a few of them. The most disturbing part of violence is when the youth have a problem with it, and that is what I am here to talk about today, youth violence. I will hope to answer three questions, one, what are causes of youth violence, two, how has violence affected my life and three, what can I do to stop youth violence.

What are some causes of youth violence? If you look at most of the school shootings, stabbings or when a student brought something dangerous to school, you find that the perpetrator was really the victim, the victim of bullying being picked on for no real reason just kids who have to prove themselves to peers or to themselves. So if that is the case it might have been so easy to prevent. If someone had the courage to defy their peers the satisfaction that they might get from bullying by befriending that poor soul they were picking on. If all that meant was saying a complement or letting them sit with you at lunch. They might not have done what they did. But no one did so you know what happened from there, loss of lives, ruined lives of so much more. So in my opinion if we can start attacking bullying head on and start building higher self esteems we could be able to stop people from repeating the past.

So my contribution to stop youth violence is just that simple, no not insignificant just simple. I will lend a hand of friendship to help to someone in need. If you were to ask some of my teacher well ok most of my teachers I would think they would say” ya Kody helped around a lot” well at least I would hope something like that. Because I believe I have helped around and tried to friendly. The boy scouts of America slogan says “do a good turn daily”. So as a scout I have a responsibility and a right to uphold my promise to do so. They say bullies are just as weak and scared as the people they pick on , the only difference is that they choose to cause havoc and grief instead of trying to help those in need. So if all we have to do to try to stop youth violence is say a complement every now and then or even who know you could end up best of friends. But how hard could that be one compliment a day come one that like being to lazy to breathe.

This next paragraph is really deep and personal it took a bit of coaxing to get it out onto paper, but it is about me. How has youth violence affected me personally? The other day I realized how youth violence has affected me personally. I wasn’t in the best of mood that day and my parents had left to my moms work to finish some papers. When we are out the family and me, I usually try to keep this “cool” about me to hide my short temper. When I am with my friends my temper is on a “def con one” I wouldn’t think that my friends have never seen my mood go to terribly sour. But when we are at home I don’t know what it is but unless there are guest over there is no “cool” and there would be no such thing as “def con”. But something snapped and I was gone. But my little sister Brianna seven is highly claustrophobic she provoked me somehow so I took a blanket

and threw it on her and immediately started screaming so I took it off and her face was tearstained and ghost white. I was disgusted with myself so I started walking away when my little brother Aaron 11 screamed as loud as he could in a taunting way and I had snapped again. When I caught him he had had eleven years to perfect it he starts crying, but my parents weren't there to stop me, but it still got to me so I threw myself in my room mad with myself almost depressed fell asleep. But I thought that my brother had made me mad no he didn't My Sunday school teacher told me quote "No one can make you mad or violent it is your choice you can choose to get mad or you could find a different option" end quote and I believe that. So I thought it appropriate to write it because it fit the subject of youth violence. But I would wish that you don't look at me differently or reprimand me because writing this is to me the start of my healing process.

But many scientists believe that violence is a learned trait. So isn't it that we learned how to deal with conflict with violence? Isn't also true we could learn how to deal with conflict without violence? A school counselor told me it takes 21 days to form a habit. So if we make it a habit to deal with conflict without violence it could become second nature. Youth Violence is a problem we can fix!

*Allen Fowles - 8th Grade
Ephraim Middle School - Teacher, Shannon Eicher*

Youth Violence

Youth violence, such as bullying, fighting, arguing, and complaining, has been a part of my life. I have done some of this in the past 14 years. Everywhere you go; someone is arguing or fighting. You may think it doesn't matter if you fight and argue when you are younger. But when you get older, it really shows in your work, in your home life, and in everything you do. I hope I can change and have fun without fighting or arguing.

In many cases, the cause of youth violence is from older and larger people treating younger and smaller people badly. This is known as bullying. One needs to understand that most bullies are not bad. They usually have a very soft heart. But sometime in their life they have been treated badly, felt embarrassed or scared, and now try to cover it up by being a bully. Soon that's the only thing they know how to do, bully younger people. Sometimes parents try to discipline you, or straighten you out for something you have done wrong. Instead of learning from this experience, kids take it wrong and feel like they have been bullied, so they turn around and treat their friends or younger kids badly.

Youth violence is not just happening here in Utah. It is happening all over the world. People's lives are being ruined because of the way they are being treated in everyday life. So what should be done to stop the youth violence in the world?

When I fight with my brothers and sisters at home, my parents sit me down and try to explain to me not to do that. They set good examples for me, So that when I am on my own in the world, I will know how to act in that kind of a situation. Still today my

parents set good examples for me. Sometimes I still get in trouble, but I learn from my mistakes and try to do better next time.

I also think we should stand next to these people, both the ones being bullied and the ones doing the bullying, and be a friend and an example to them. I could sit down with the person who is being hurt, or bullied, and be their friend. I could stand up to youth violence by asking the bully to stop it, and stand up to the person who is hurting the other person. This way, the one being picked on won't feel alone. They will have a friend, someone who really cares and wants the best for them. Then I could go to the person that is bullying and be kind to him. Let him know that he also has a friend, and that he doesn't have to bully people to get them to like him. Then set a good example for both of them. Hopefully, the bully would stop doing what he is doing, and help people, instead of hurt them. I think this would help both people so they won't join gangs or drop out of school. They would have a friend who would help them avoid bad situations in their life. Their life could be switched totally around.

I am a smaller kid, I have experienced youth violence and bullying and I know that it is not fun to go through. You feel embarrassed and scared. But the best thing is to be the bigger person by choosing the right. Have courage, stand up for what you believe in, don't get mad, and try and work it out. Many times this will solve the problem and the bullying stops.

So the next time you see someone that has gone through, or is going through youth violence, stand next to them, help them, be a good example and their friend. Let's all work together and stop youth violence.

Noelle Strehlow - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

Youth Violence

Youth Violence is a real thing. It's not just a myth or a story tail. It's in this world and its all around. On the news they tell countless storys of rapes and murder or kid shouting other kids. I always sit and wander what drove them to do such a thing. Were they on drugs or being bulled or something? What could make a school kid even think of doing such a thing and then I remembered Youth Violence is a real thing.

Some people close there eyes to the truth, they just want to prevent the pain. Some people think why does it matter it's not affecting me. But, the truth is it could be affecting your neighbor or a friend down the street. Kids at school who have no friends or get harassed constantly, are affected greatly. Kids passing by someone in the hall don't realize that the person next to them may be the loneliest of all. When someone's getting teased or bullied, they feel all alone. So go stand up for them it will let them know your there for them, so they know their not alone. Sometimes kids have no one to sit with so they sit by them selves, at lunch or just around. So go sit with them or at least smile at them, but don't just leave them alone.

Sometimes they hid their feeling. They put a smile on their face. They bottle up their anger until it is too late. Then when it explodes they make a big mistake.

They hurt people they don't mean to hurt or they hurt their body with drugs and smokes. Some kids don't have a happy home. They have parents who do drugs; they think its O.K. because they were raised that way. They think the whole worlds

like that and grow up to be the same. So lets start know with the children to break that chain.

I once knew a man that did some terrible things. He was soon punished because I turned him in. I knew what he was doing was wrong because of what I learned. It really hurt my family and me even worse. I stopped caring about other people's problems because I thought mine was the worst. I stopped watching the news because I didn't want to hear, about other people's lives once I knew how much they hurt. I just wanted to protect my self from remembering my pain. But then I met a friend who made my pain seem smaller then a pin. That's when I realized how many people needed my help.

Kid's who have bad things happen to them or get laughed at a lot and harassed everyday or have a lot of troubles and don't know were to turn. They turn to drugs and violence thinking that will help them get away. It makes them forget the pain that they feel or it helps them hid the pain they don't want to reveal. So if you see a kid at school who looks a little hurt. Don't be shy just go say hi. People think "What can I do? I'm just one person." But, if another person is watching you they mite do the same. And remember even if you only talk to one kid you may be changing their life or lighting up their day. I know I can't stop bad things from happening but I can do my best to prevent them.

McKayla Thompson - 8th Grade
Box Elder Middle School - Teacher, Rob Thomas

I look and see terrifying things. People are blown aside as if they were a pile of leaves. Explosions are everywhere. I hear screams of terror. I feel a shiver going down my spine. There is blood painted on the ground. Bodies are strewn throughout the horrifying scene. It is only an advertisement on television. I cannot even imagine that anyone would want such a game.

I walk down the halls at school and hear yelling. I look to my right and see two teens caught up in a fist fight. They are not aware of the teacher and principal walking down the hall to pull them apart. As I walk away, I can hear swearing and back talking. I get away as fast as possible. I only know that I do not want to hear anymore.

When my family goes to Lake Powell, we must go through security. I ask my parents why and their answer is, "because of all the violence in our world". I think about what they said to me. I think of all the violence that must be going on in the world today. Sometimes it scares me to think of these things. It scares me that someone would hate another human being so much that they would want to hurt them. Or even worse, take away their life.

I hear of killings in a school. Students are murdered without mercy. I am almost scared to go to school for fear of someone else coming into my school with a gun. I see stories on the news about a child who is killed, or abused. I read in the paper of a teen that is kidnapped, and is later found dead. My life is greatly affected by the horrible doings of others.

There are plenty of excuses for all of the violence in our world today. But excuses are like armpits, they all stink. When teens play video games with guns, they begin to think that if they have a gun, they are in control. They start to think that it is okay to hit and punch one another. They think that if they do not get their way, the only solution is to hurt.

When teens have parents who drink and take drugs, they are instantly exposed to the world of drugs and addiction. They have a problem and think that the only way to solve it is to take drugs. They are soon addicted, and will do anything to get the drugs they want. When you are on drugs you are not always completely using your head. You do not seem to have feelings or thoughts of others, only for yourself. When you

are in this mode, you will hurt and say things you might have never really meant.

When a teen goes to a movie that portrays violence, they begin to assume that it is *cool* to have a gun and get into fights. It may soon get out of hand. Then someone nearly always ends up seriously hurt. I personally believe that one of our troubles in our world today is that too many movies are made with so much violence that teens start to believe that it is just a natural part of our every day lives and cannot be altered.

If I am to help even one person overcome their anger, I must first learn to control my own. I am not a perfect child, and I do have my moments, so I can definitely improve my own behavior. One of the biggest things that has helped me to not get angry at certain times is to count to ten. If that does not work, then I count even higher until I have settled down enough to keep my feelings in control.

At my age I cannot really stop much of the violence that goes on around us in our everyday lives. But I can be an example to my friends, neighbors, and family members. I can encourage them to just be nice, to not buy or play these horrifying video games, to only see movies that do not suggest that violence is a solution to our problems, and most of all to stay away from people who are involved in drugs and violence.

Violence is never a solution to our problems. In reality, it only creates more. I cannot realistically stop all of the violence that goes on in our modern day world. However, I can certainly start with myself.

Kekaliloa Vuna - 8th Grade
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda L. Lujan

Do the Write Thing

How has violence affected my life? It affected it trying to look tough in front of my friends. When I'm around my peers, I act weird like talk funny, dress like gangster, and talk like one. If your friends asked you if you smoke what would your reply it would be yes," Why", because you don't want your friend to make fun of you. If your friend asked you if you got laid what would you say yes, same answer why same reason because you don't want to be made fun of that why. Say if you and your friends walk down the hall and somebody pumps in to you," What would you do", pump them back and probably you would cause a big fight and might get suspended for a stupid reason. Why would you want to do that? Because you want to look good in front of your friends. But when you go to the office you act like a real nice kid when the principal ask you if your ever going to do what you just did your response would be yes because you don't want to get in trouble and when you walk out of the principal office you go back to your old way.

What cause youth violence?ation. When they go buy any stuff they come back the next day and show-off to people and what does other people thing they say hey that tied I should go buy that because it looks cool and gangster because people join gang just because they think it cool or they join for protection. Because if you join a gang other people has there back .I think it stupid to join a gang because how do you join a gang you get beat up by other people just to join a gang. Plus they don't think about there family, because I heard on the news awhile a go that a guy got shoot for his brother because he was in T.C G Tongan Crib Gang. That why I think it stupid to join any kind of gang.

What can I do about youth violence? I can go to people that I know that join a gang and talk to them what choose of what good and bad. Let them know that there family will get hurt and let them know that people care for them and loves them. Tell them do the right thing and you might not that in the future there might be a scholarship or a football scholarship waiting for them in the future. Or just hang out with him so he doesn't do anything stupid. Talk to people to make a community, get them to get involved in school activity, avoid alcohol and drugs.

Brandon Webb - 8th Grade
South Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Natalie Bowen

Do the Write Thing

I've been asked to take time to talk about **youth or child violence**. In general, I'd like to talk about what causes it, like what leads to being abused or what's going through the abusers head. Also, how it effects the abused, the abusers, and the abused's family's lives. But finally, I'd like to talk about how I or many others (**including you**) can be a catalyst of change for youth abuse. Many underestimate this cruel, unjust beating. I want to tell you that abuse is serious in this essay. Please enjoy.

First of all, what causes it. Many people think, mostly, that abusers abuse because their mentally challenged or always drunk. But actually, they usually beat their children because they were abused. When they were young they were most likely abused. For some reason, I guess that after years and years of being hurt and beaten to a pulp, it triggers something in their head driving them crazy. Maybe because they've been treated so bad, they want their children to feel the same way they felt. It might be a way to release all the anger they've accumulated after a life times of beatings. We may never know, but since the facts point to most abusers being abused during their childhood, I'm guessing that's what usually causes abuse.

Secondly, how it impacts lives. Have you noticed that when a child gets constantly abused, it usually leaves the child traumatized? Or when children watch their family members being abused, it hurts them in many other ways than physically? Or when abused children talk about their past, it's extremely hard for them to pull it out of their memories? Abuse impacts lives in two ways, **EMOTIONALLY** and **PHYSICALLY**. It effects them emotionally because after you've been abused over and over again, it changes your personality. It usually makes them more shelled up, holding their emotions in until it explodes. It may make them harder to trust others. Many times, abused people have little or no friends, meaning they might be not that fun to be around. It effects them physically by permanent or maiming damages. For example: when they get abused, many times a limb or arm is broken, being maimed for a bit. Sometimes, however, permanent damage can occur, like after being jammed on the head over and over again, causing mental damage. Though some may recover a broken body part, nobody can repair a broken brain.

But finally, I'd like to talk about how I, the community, or even you can be a catalyst for change in youth abuse. I think that if we had stricter laws on abuse, less people would be abused. Also what if we had specific clinics or rehabilitation centers for abusers. This may help troubled abusers forget about their past and live a happy, normal, non-abusive life. Another thing we can do is have more ways to help children come out about being abused. Usually children have trouble telling people about being abused because they're afraid that the abuser will find them and hurt them, or they just want to get it over with. I think that if the youth found that it was easy to tell people about their abuse, children would feel more comfortable about explaining this.

Now, I'm not saying that abuse is only caused by troubled pasts of abusers. It can be a drunken rage or they might have a mental disability. What I'm trying to explain is that **abuse is not a joke**. I just want people to realize how horrible abuse can be. I'm not trying to make this paragraph seem all depressing or melodramatic, just life is difficult being the abused (it's even hard living the life of an abuser). I'm lucky and live with a loving family and have great friends. But some people aren't so lucky. You may just read this essay and say, "Whatever". I'm okay with that, but if you want to stop abuse, maybe take some of my ideas and use them. Your choice. Thank you for taking time to read this.

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