
UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Student Writings
2008

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice



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Do the Write Thing 2008 VIP Judges

- Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley
Beesley Foundation
- Laurie Hart
Callister, Nebeker & McCullough
- Patricia L. DeLoatche
Health Policy Director, Sen. Orrin Hatch
- Christine Kearl
Utah Deputy for Education
- Thomas Patterson
Director, Utah Department of Corrections
- Billy Schuffenhauer
Olympic Silver Medalist
- Mark Shurtleff
Utah Attorney General
- Chris Wingert
Real Salt Lake
- Hope Woodside
Fox 13 News
- Judge Andrew Valdez
Third District Juvenile Court
- Mike Young
President, University of Utah

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Organizing Committee**

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Tonia Hashimoto, Chair
Jessica Hernandez
Jennifer Jolley
Holly Martak
Huy Nguyen

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- Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley
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- Kuwait-America Foundation
- Law Firm of Callister, Nebeker &
McCullough
- National Campaign to Stop Violence
- REAL Salt Lake
- Wheeler Foundation
- 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 as reauthorized in 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 1,300 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence. More than 800 chose to write, with nearly 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

Amanda Groneman

8th Grade, Springville Junior High
Teacher, Mary Rice

Christian Serage

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Chris Cannon

Amanda Groneman - 8th Grade
Springville Junior High - Teacher, Mary Rice

Way Back When

It all started when we were small,
When all we worried about was our favorite ball.

Those good old elementary school days,
Now it all almost seems just like a haze.

In first grade, he really wasn't that bad.
He just pushed and shoved, right in front of my dad.

In third grade, it seemed to get a little worse,
He would steal my favorite stuffed animal horse.

In fifth grade, he would always lie,
When the teacher would ask if he made me cry.

Then came seventh grade, we were now in middle school.
He would embarrass us and make us feel like such fools.

Once we got to ninth grade it was a little more serious,
He started swearing when other people made him furious.

In eleventh grade, he got suspended for threatening students,
But in his mind, it didn't even leave a dent.

Twelfth grade was finally here,
But all he really cared about was having a beer.

He graduated with the rest of us, I'm not really sure how.
I swear he cheated, because he was barely smarter than a cow.

My classmates and I are now going to college,
While he sits flipping burgers, not using any of his knowledge.

My wedding day has finally come, I am so full of cheer!
While he runs from the police in fear.

One month later, as I'm sitting at home,
I get a call from my mother who is on the phone.

She says something terrible has taken place,
I can't even imagine the expression on her face.

She tells me of how the other night,
My sister was killed, even though she was so bright

She was so smart, although there was nothing she could do,
For she was killed by drunk driving, and by who?
She was killed by that kid who was in my first grade class.
What if I could have helped that boy instead of now watching my sister pass?

I wonder if he would have been different if in first grade I was his friend.
Instead of telling my dad how he pushed me in line, until I was at the end.

What would have happened if
In third grade I shared my toy horse,
Instead of making things come to the worst.

Or in fifth grade instead of crying,
I could have taught him to stop lying.

In seventh grade I could have made it funny
I could have laughed at his jokes because they actually were kinda funny.

In ninth grade I could have tried to make him less mad,
That way he wouldn't have a reason to use language that was so bad.

Or in eleventh I could have helped him apologize for his mistakes,
Helped him realize that people's lives could eventually be at stake.

In twelfth grade I should have invited him to our graduation party,
We were having fun and being safe at our party.

I could have helped him get into college,
Instead I was self centered about all of my knowledge.

Now what would have happened if I had done all of these things?
Would he still have been drinking or flipping burgers at Burger King?

I wish I would have done all of those things,
Way back when the alphabet was a fun thing to sing!

For maybe my sister would still be alive.
And I would know I would have helped somebody fix up their life.

Christian Serage - 8th Grade

Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

Youth Violence: Cause, Effect, Solutions

When asked about *youth violence* I was caught by surprise. I thought to myself *how can I write about youth violence?* I live in Bloomington, Utah; there isn't any *youth violence in Bloomington, Utah*. I was stumped. But as I thought more about it, I realized that *yes* there is *youth violence* in Bloomington, Utah. I see it almost *everyday*. But, don't get me wrong I'm not talking about *Crypts and Bloods* type violence, you know the kind you read about in the newspaper, no, but big things start small.

Petty arguments, bullying, shoving and a lot of people saying things they shouldn't are common at my school. It seems that disrespect for each other, lying, cheating, stealing, and disregard for rules are characteristics the kids involved in this type of behavior share. I don't know for sure, but I bet gang members in big cities didn't start off shooting guns at each other, they probably started with the same kinds of "small" problems I see at my school.

As I thought more about my own experiences with *youth violence*, I asked myself the question *how are these kids different from me?* As a teenager grooming and dressing habits are always sending a message, even the way I dress sends a message, but the way these kids involved in *youth violence* dress and groom gives them a rebellious appearance. It seems that they don't care about school. My guess is that these problems stem from family issues. I thought about it and realized most *youth violence* is caused by the breakdown of the family. Kids that come from broken homes, troubled marriages, or abusive homes have nothing to hold on to but being the tough guy in school. Parents probably affect *youth violence* the most. If parents aren't home or don't take an active roll in their child's life, who then is doing the teaching? Answer: video games, TV, or other kids at their school. It is a generally accepted belief that kids join gangs because they get something from a gang that they're not getting from home. Why are families abusive? Abuse starts out with bickering, quarrelling, and general contention, but it often grows in to physical violence. Remember what I said, *big things start small!* I think it is clear; *youth violence* is rooted to the breakdown of the family.

Youth violence hasn't really noticeably affected my life so far. I have a peaceful life, I don't worry about getting shot or stabbed, I don't even worry about getting a bloody nose in a fistfight, really. You could say my life is easy going. But if the breakdown of the family continues, *youth violence* will probably affect all of us, *everywhere*. We may end up keeping ourselves locked up in our homes because we fear getting shot, stabbed, or kidnapped by just stepping outside. News reports are full of violent crimes. What if that doubles, triples? As the breakdown of the family continues there might not be anymore peaceful places like Bloomington, Utah left. Yes, it is true *youth violence* really hasn't affected my life yet, but if *youth violence* continues there might not be anyway to escape it. All of us need to take action now by realizing how important our families really are and by doing all we can to strengthen them.

Reducing *youth violence* seems as though it has its limitations. I can't make people do the right thing, no one can. But I can change *myself*. I can start by being more of a peacemaker; I can set a better example and be more friendly to people who need a friend. Maybe I can help people strengthen their family by strengthening my own. I can stand up to bullies by being their friend, because truly I think that is what they really want. One person really *can* make a difference in this world. We need fewer people preaching and telling us what is right and wrong, and more people who will simply be a friend and a lead by example. Sincerely caring for struggling kids would probably be a powerful influence in helping them to change. Look past *appearances*, we don't know anyone's whole story, we just need to be careful to not judge a book by its cover.

Youth Violence is a serious matter; we need to treat it with serious care. Let us all start by reaching out to one person who is struggling in life with family issues. Just think, it might make a real difference in that person's life, as well as our own. You never know what you might do for one person; you could change someone's life just by being a friend. So next time you see someone who seems like they may be struggling, talk to them, be a friend. Let us all work together and *keep SMALL things small*, you never know; we could change this world of violence.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Runners Up

Rachel Rowley

8th Grade, Highland Middle School

Teacher, Kim Irvine

Ben Stewart

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School

Teacher, Chris Cannon

Rachel Rowley - 8th Grade
Highland Middle School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

The Day My Best Friend Left

The day my best friend left
Was the day I chose the wrong path.
I said so many hurtful words
And lost so much respect.
I hurt so many people
That I could have called my friends.
I resorted to bullying,
And that has changed my life.
I help the ones in need
And help them gain what was once lost.
If I could risk my time to help someone,
Then I would risk it all.

On January 15, 2006 my best friend passed away. He meant the world to me and he was my main source of joy in my life. I didn't need any friends because I had Scotty. Scotty was my best friend and also my down-syndrome uncle. He wasn't like everyone else. He acted like a child and he got excited over just about everything. He loved music, especially The Beatles, and playing with his "people" and doing his "puzzles." Well the day he died I felt like my whole life was a crazy mess. I felt like I just wanted to crash and burn so I

wouldn't have to deal with any of the pain. Pretty soon I became a violent person. Since I didn't have any friends, I didn't need them because I had Scotty, I was all alone and it seemed like no one cared about me. My self confidence level went plummeting down and I didn't have respect for myself or anyone around me. I started yelling and saying hurtful words to people that weren't even mean to me at all. I was rude to people simply because they were enjoying life and I wasn't. I started pushing people around because it made me feel better. I was so angry because Scotty left me alone with no one to talk to and tell how I felt. It wasn't fair that such a wonderful person that meant so much to me could just leave me. I just wasn't ready to let him go and then he just left without warning. All these thoughts were running through my head like, what is he doing, and does he watch me. Then one day I just went numb. It didn't hurt me anymore when I would hurt someone else's feelings. I no longer gained happiness by being mean but I didn't lose anything and I didn't feel guilty anymore for the things that I said that I knew weren't even true. One day I started to actually think about what I was doing. I told myself that other people shouldn't have to suffer just because I wasn't happy. Since the day Scotty died, I have realized that if I would have handled it in a positive way then I probably wouldn't have hurt anyone in the process of finding happiness. Everyone that I had yelled at or pushed around has forgiven me. They knew I was having a hard time and I'm so grateful and shocked that they actually forgave me. I still can't believe, even to this day, that those people actually accepted me.

I think uncontrollable amounts of pain cause violence. When you feel like you have nothing left in your life. In the process of thinking that you resort to putting other people down just so

they will feel the pain you do. You just feel so miserable and it's even more unbearable to see people having fun when you're not. No one seems to understand your pain so you give up trying to TELL them how you feel and instead you SHOW them in a violent way by hurting someone else that doesn't deserve it in the first place. I think youth violence is mostly caused by pain in their life. Whether its abuse, death of a loved one, or just having your family take sides to your disadvantage.

Everyone deserves a second chance so whenever I see a bully, or even have one; I just tell myself that they are probably going through a difficult time in their life. I try my best to accept these people that bully. I probably would have stopped bullying if someone, even just one person, would have reached out to me and said they were there for me. I reach out to people that struggle because I could be that one person to change someone's life around for the better. I am a better person today because I actually respected myself enough to stop bullying. So here's my advice to the bullies out there; Please don't think you have to just go on miserable for the rest of your life. You can change and you don't have to be a terrible person to do so.

Ben Stewart - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

Youth Violence

Youth violence is all around us. Sometimes we don't notice it. Youth violence is becoming more and more frequent, ten years ago a school shooting was the last thing on anyone's mind. Although it seems like there is that much violence, it affects us every day. The teachers have to cover the doors with paper and lock them during school. We have lock-down drills every once in a while so that we know what to do if someone brings a gun to school, but ten years ago the kids probably wouldn't even know what a lock-down drill was. Even if we know that there are school shootings we think, "Oh that could never happen here, that stuff always happens in places like New York." just when you least suspect it happens and youth violence strikes. A couple of weeks ago in St. George, Utah, there was a boy and a girl walking in the park when a gang of boys jumped them but they let the girl go. They beat the boy up and then stabbed him in the back four times. He survived but is still in the hospital. Also about a year ago a girl was kidnapped by one of the kids at school. She was found two weeks later and she had been murdered. When you hear about stuff like that on the news or from someone you know it really hits home at how real youth violence is, and that it can happen anywhere and anytime.

Youth violence is usually affected by something. Sometimes it's because they play killing games all day long, and they play them so much that to them it doesn't seem so bad. What affects youth violence the most is their parents. Most of the time it's because the parent beat them and don't even care in the least bit what their kids think, say, or do. School has a big affect on youth violence too. Everyone is mean and self centered; the kids at school are set on discouraging everyone else in order to make themselves feel better. Sometimes a whole bunch of kids pick on one person until they can't take it anymore and a verbal fight turns into a fist fight or a fist fight turns into one of the kids bringing a gun to school and shooting innocent people. Occasionally they end up shooting themselves too or committing suicide in some way. Friends have a big influence on them too. If they have bad friends they usually end up following the example of their friends and start doing bad things too.

Youth violence is something that we could all do without. Preventing youth violence can be asking someone to hang out with you if they look lonely or sad. It can be smiling at people as you pass them in the hall or on the street. Helping to prevent youth violence can be trying to be nice and happy towards someone even if they're being rude. Talking to them about their problems can help to prevent it too. Sometimes you can't help them very much because it's a problem at their home that needs to be resolved when you can't be there to try and help. Trying to be positive towards them and elevating their self esteem makes a huge impact on youth violence. One person or one nice thing towards someone can alter their decision to resort to violence or suicide about their problems. Trying to be their friend will make them feel so much better and happier. If you see youth violence no matter who started it, why they started it, what the fight is about, who is involved in the violence, or what type of violence it is, step in and try to resolve the problem or people might get hurt physically and or mentally. Stopping youth violence isn't always fun or easy, but having everyone get along is always rewarding and is essential to happiness and to stopping youth violence.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

State Finalists

Casey Badger

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

Michael Roche

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

Harrison Hughes

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

Gloire Seba

**7th Grade, Youth Services Shelter School
Teacher, Nicci Wadsworth**

Lauren Larsen

**8th Ephraim Middle School
Teacher, Shannon Eicher**

Lauren Smith

**8th Grade, Centennial Middle School
Teacher, Amanda Peterson**

Alexandra Maiava

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

Rachel Stevens

**7th Grade, Cedar Ridge Middle School
Teacher, Sherese Merrill**

Casey Badger - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

Youth Violence

Youth violence has affected me in a lot of ways. I use to live in Moscow Idaho. I was a kid that was bullied a lot. I think it was mostly because of my size and the way I acted. In sixth grade I wasn't the most mature kid, not that the people that bullied me were any mature then I was. A lot of times the bullies would just threaten me, and when I did go and tell a teacher the bully would just lie and get me into trouble to. So I decided to keep myself from getting in trouble, I wouldn't tell a teacher. I had to deal with them bullying me. Sometimes the problem would be really bad, so I would tell a teacher, and of course I would get in trouble to because the bully lied. After five years we finally moved, and we were moving to Florida. I thought that this place wouldn't be as bad as Idaho I was wrong. This place was almost worse then Idaho. At this place I got bullied even worse. Once and awhile and come home to find out that had a bruise. Now you probably think it was a boy, sometimes it was but usually it was a girl. I had to do the same as in Idaho just grin and bear it.

What are causes of youth violence, well there's a few. One of the ones that I think is a cause of youth violence is the videogames these kids are playing. Now I have nothing against videogames, I play them to but it's the kind of games they the kids are playing. Like some of these games you're a bad guy killing cops and robbing stores. The games these people play are too violent. One of the reasons these games aren't good is because its children playing them and teenagers, and because they play it constantly. Like, let's say a kid plays one of these games and the other kid doesn't, say both gets mad at someone now do you think the chances are higher or lower that kid that plays those games is going to get violent? My opinion is that the kid that played those games is going to have a higher chance of getting violent with the kid then the kid that doesn't play those games. Another cause of youth violence is the family. The families in America are decreasing and a lot kids only live with there dad, or with there mom, some kids only live with there aunts, uncle, grandpa, or grandmas. A reason for this decrease in the family is divorce or drugs.

There are a few things we can do to prevent youth violence. If someone is bullying you find out if he upset about something and if he is, try and be his friend. A lot of times this will not work, because the person is just bugging you to make you mad and when you get mad the person knows he's beat you, he's won. So one thing you can do about this is just ignore him, I and he might stop bugging you because he knows your not going to get mad. Another thing you can do is just being nice to people even to your enemies. Say the person is having a hard time in school its probably because their parents won't help them, so they'll most likely be depressed so they want to make someone else to feel depressed to help them feel good about themselves. What you could do is help that person with their school work and he might stop bullying.

Harrison Hughes - 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Chris Cannon

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Youth Violence

In this article, I would like to address these three questions. 1. How has youth violence affected my life? 2. What are the causes of youth violence? 3. What can I do about youth violence?

How has youth violence affected my life? In my early childhood, I didn't think much about violence, I lived in a good family and spent most of my time outside and was oblivious to the unstable world of contention and violence we live in. Now, as I am older and more aware, I see that most every aspect of life has some hint of violence, however subtle. It affects my life because of all the fights that I witness or hear about, in which friends and people I know are involved. Also, the way that some teenagers gain and maintain their popularity is by intimidation and bullying. This is sad to me knowing that some of my friends have been picked on because some kid wants the attention of a certain group.

What are the causes of youth violence? In thinking about this question, I drew from a large web of things that can help lead someone to use violence. Friends and peer pressure are a big cause of youth violence. You should always be able to answer "no" to this question: would these friends ever ask me to abuse someone? TV, video games, music and movies, can depict violence, murder, and are everyday things that make it seem not as bad. Music can change your attitude, if it is "angry" music, it can increase the chances of violence. Your family and how you were raised play a big role in how you act. If a child is exposed to violence at regular intervals and is abused at home, they might decide that it is O.K. and decide to abuse others. A teenager's environment plays an important role in how they act. If you place them in an environment with large amounts of crime and violence, they are likely to take on the mood of their environment and become violent. Drugs and alcohol cause people to become drunk and blind, while in their state of stupor they may cause themselves to get in fights more easily. Though it is not legal to have alcohol as a minor, it is still easy for teenagers to get a hold of it from parents and friends. Extreme depression can result in murders and shootings, usually caused from others bullying them.

What can I do about youth violence? In order to keep others and myself violence free, we must work together. With our friends, we can help each other to avoid fighting. If we can make friends with those who are bullied and include them in our friendships, they will not be bullied. If we can learn to stand together as one against the plague of youth violence, we can make a difference. If we stand together as one we are strong, alone, we are weak. If we can all learn to realize that it takes two people to start a fight, one person to stand up and speak out, one person to make a difference, and one decision to change the world, we will conquer and reduce youth violence to a minimum. The influence of friends is

probably the strongest positive influence there can be. If we can sacrifice and give up our violent games, movies, and actions, we will become a stronger nation, people, and world. The impacts of violence, in all its forms, measures great damage, imagine if Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin or George Washington had been casualties of gang wars. Where would our world be? If we can unite for this cause, we can save people like them, who will rise to be great one day. If we can accomplish this task of eliminating youth violence, our world will be much improved, maybe even to the point of the elimination of wars, and therefore, world peace. Remember, it all starts with us. Are you violence free?

Pg.2

Lauren Larsen - 8th Grade
Ephraim Middle School - Teacher, Shannon Eicher

Youth violence has been a part of my life in many ways. First of all I've grown up around children with disabilities, because my mom works with them. I've seen them be bullied all through my life. Why? Because they're different. People will call them names and not include them. That's hard for me because I know these kids, and I know how great they really are. Kids just find it hard to befriend other kids who aren't just like them. They see them as freaks, and outsiders, but what they don't see is, if you befriended them they wouldn't be freaks and outsiders. When they do something we don't understand we get scared, but we shouldn't. When I was in preschool there was a child with disabilities, and he liked to pull hair. When he pulled other kids hair they would get mad at him, but he didn't know any better. So one day he pulled my hair and instead of getting mad I grabbed his hands, and just held his hands so he wouldn't pull my hair. I didn't get mad because that would be bullying, and I knew he didn't know that what he was doing was bad. If we'd give them the chance to learn from us maybe people would see them differently. Get to know those children, and find out what they're like. Find out why they're special.

One of the causes of youth violence is that kids find it fun to put other kids down. I don't understand, but it makes them feel better about themselves. What they need to understand is that it makes you feel so much better to lift people up when they're down. We just need to remember that when we put someone down we are using youth violence.

When I walk down the halls, and when I'm in my classes I hear very vulgar language. Another thing you hear is that there is kids who would do something to hurt themselves just because they want people to feel bad for them, and because they are lonely. Because they do things differently people think it's not ok to talk to them. But it is because they're just as special as we all are. In middle school, kids think that if they swear, and hurt themselves it will make people think differently of them. It does and I feel sorry for them because if they think so little of themselves that they'd do something they know they shouldn't to get attention it shows how dangerous youth violence really is. Because when they swear and bring violence in to the school they bring youth violence on all the other children in the school. So next time you ignore, or are mean to someone remember it could end up hurting others to.

One thing I can do to stop youth violence is be a friend to every one. When you see a person in need of friend be the friend they need. There are so many wonderful kids out there that are just waiting for you to come and befriend them. So be nice to every one and stop youth violence because we are all special. We just need a good friend to realize it.

Alexandra Maiava - 8th Grade
Highland Middle School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

The Image of Death beyond its Morals

Night after night, we always had to leave.
Crying and screaming, the lights always out...
I wondered if I would live out my life.
I was full of doubt.
Crying, dying a little more inside.
My life was hell,
And I knew it wouldn't last...
If I didn't tell.
I felt colder,
When I sat day by day,
Watching with fear,
My life drifts away.
Fell asleep with the scare.
Of never waking up,
Trying to imagine the lives,
Of those with such luck.
When his drunken slurs
Of hatred and despair
Spilled from his mouth,
It was never humanly fair.
His mouth full of words,
My crying, my shrills, my eyes full of pain.
His excruciating shouts...
Always mentioning my name.
I was scared to go home,
I was scared of the knife.
I was scared of the yelling....
That would occupy my night.
No one cared enough to stop.
His abuse in my dreams...
The knife in his hand,
My life being stabbed at the seams...
He always hurt us,
He always told us his hate,
He made sure we knew...
That we were his bait.
The word of malicious insults,
The wicked grin upon his face.
But this time he wouldn't win.
This time he was in second place.
He packed his bags...
He headed for the door.
I knew this was the last time.
No abuse anymore.
This was my time...
This was the time when,
The smiled leaked on my face.
I could laugh once again.

When I was a kid, my childhood wasn't full of laughter and fun. I never got to run around the yard having a care free personality and screaming my lungs out, instead I stayed home... cleaning my room to the seams of the walls... tip-toeing around the house. Not to wake up Him. My flesh... My blood, the one I called father.

The smell of the blood... the smell of rust and salt, I could hear him coming to the door, Cringing at every heavy footstep that hit the tile. I pushed my weight against the door. And locked it holding the knob tight with all the strength I had left in me. My stamina gone... My lungs felt as if they were tided together... compressed. Cold tears streamed down my flustered face... My life was endless hell that I never was able to escape.

I screamed through the door, and I remember those words to this day "You're not my Dad. You will never be my real dad. Real dads don't hit their children" I cried... tears getting caught in my throat and sending coughs through the dark silent bathroom. Then I felt it...the door swung open, hitting me backwards into the tub. I felt the pain shoot through my lower back; His acrid face looking down on me. The pain I felt was atrocious. I lifted my hand to the top of my head.

I felt the sticky thick liquid sticking to my hand as I saw the red probing around the creases of my fingers my head started to spin, my world purling down into the black abyss.

I found myself in my room. Everything seemed white. I looked up at my mother staring at me with loving eyes. "Everything is going to be okay" She said. I drifted off into a blur of vile memories. I found out the next day that the police finally came and took him away.

They never believed our stories... and they never ever came until now. I was thankful they took him...

My father has changed. He has a new family in Oceanside, California and I am happy for him. I know he loves me and regrets everything that he had done for those five years. I have forgiven him for his wrongs... But I still have a wall up against him. I haven't really had a real dad ever before. And I don't think I ever will.

People think that violence is the solution to everything these days. A simple insult, or word towards someone can cause a whole school year of violence, terrible grades, and even... a future headed towards drugs and drinking. I can't really tell the future, for I am just a thirteen year old kid that hasn't seen much of the world but... I have seen violence. I have witnessed fights, just a face in the crowd of the hustle and bustle.

Seeing kids get picked on day by day. I try to help the person being bullied and try to make it stop. Making friends with that person could simply stop everything. You could be saving someone's future. Reporting a simple incident can mean the world to that person. I know that kids in elementary, junior high and high school experience violence almost everyday. They think that telling someone, or letting an authority figure know is going to make it worse... but, it

could help you. I'm not saying they will always hurry to your side and help you with all of your problems... but just trying can build up your courage.

Life isn't easy, and violence doesn't make it any easier but I know if I can survive five years of exclusive violence and recover fluently. I know you can do it too. I'm always here to listen... And I vow to always have an open heart... to listen to help those experiencing violence. I KNOW I can make a difference.

Michael Roche - 8th Grade
Highland Middle School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

WILDFIRE

Violence is like a wildfire. Burning everything in sight spreading the fire farther and farther until it is out of control. I realize that essays like mine are like water pistols trying to put out a wildfire. For those of you who are simple minded the simile above means that essays like mine can do nothing to stop the problem of violence. Everyone has used violence at one point of their lives. Whether it is shoving someone, playfully, or calling somebody stupid. Violence is everything.

Violence is everywhere. It's in our music, our magazines, and even in our favorite television shows. Although, violence is found in these things, I don't believe these things spread violence. I've never wanted to go beat someone up after listening to my music, or watching an action movie. The only thing that spreads violence I believe is the only people who can stop it, you and me. Imagine walking around at school and you get bullied in front of your friends. You feel like your dignity just got ripped to shreds right? You believe that the only way to get your dignity back is to bully someone else. You feel better for awhile. But while you smile in your false victory your dignity is being ripped up into smaller, non-repairable, pieces.

Something just as bad as violence is watching violence being committed and not doing anything about it. I have been in this situation many times. Sometimes you feel that it is not your business, so you don't have to do anything about it. But, I have one thing to tell you. It is 100% your business. Just place yourself in that person's shoes and you would understand. You would probably scared and ashamed of yourself right? And you look around to see if someone would

stand up to be a hero. You feel that you would want to be anywhere else than where you are now. And you look around and see someone watching what is happening and not doing a thing to help you. All it takes to help someone and make them feel like they're not alone is one word "Stop". Those four simple letters can mean the world to someone. It shows them that there is still good in the world and that they don't deserve to be treated like this.

The fire of violence is unstoppable. Politicians blame alcohol, and they blame things we use everyday such as video games, music and, movies. But they are completely wrong. Violence is caused by people. People like you and me. Violence spreads from one person to the next like an incurable disease. The cure isn't essays or guest speakers. The only cure is the thing that causes it. People like you and me. You can't ask people to end violence, you can only ask them to not to allow violence to continue by doing anything possible to prevent it. That can be as simple as using a four letter word or as difficult as telling a responsible adult.

Violence is like a wildfire, a fire that cannot ever be doused. However, it can be fought against from people like you and me. It can be fought by someone as young as three years old and someone who is one hundred years old. It can be fought by the rich, and by the poor. Violence can be defeated. But it will take time, for people to realize their mistakes and take responsibility for their actions. Only then can we eradicate violence from the face of our earth.

Gloire Seba - 7th Grade
Youth Services Shelter School - Teacher, Nicci Wadsworth

Doing the Write thing!!!

When I was 6 in Africa, this was the first time I had seen people killing each other. What I saw wasn't right, but it all started on a Sunday afternoon after church. My mom was pregnant with my brother Joshua. My dad was at work and me and my brothers were at home then it happened the war started.

The soldiers came to my house breaking down the door with guns and we did not know what was going on at the time. They told us we were not from the state. So they made my two brothers fight each other one of my brothers was sick during the time but they didn't care. They went to my cousin's house where my mom was at and hit her in the back with an AK-47. They took my family to jail, made us sit there and say nothing. They hit my dad in front of us until he couldn't breathe so we sat and waited.

A man came in and he was the chief of these soldiers. He had seen that my mom was pregnant and thought that it wasn't right. He told the soldiers to let us go or else there would be some consequences. He told us that it wasn't a safe place to be at so he took us to a camp in Cameroon where we stayed at for two months.

From there on we went to California and lived there for a 2 months. After that I moved to New York and lived there for 2 months. Now I live here in Utah. We were planning on moving from here but we stayed obviously. If the 2 states didn't fight about money, gold, and guns I wouldn't be here right now. Some times I think to my self how many people died. I should be thankful to God that I am here because if it wasn't for the chief I would probably be dead.

I think the only way to stop it is with love. The way to prevent violence is to not start it in the first place. Youth violence has not affected my life because I never let it. I think the reason us youth fight is because all the hate and pain hurt our life. So when they get mad they let it all out. Youth violence is dumb because they fight for stupid things. Example- girls, friend's, and in gangs if you talk trash you will get hit. I think that is dumb some of it is to impress a gang leader or even a girl.

Kids get into gangs because they need support, security, safety and money. Then they start using drugs and selling them. They do that to not only to fit in but to get money quicker. What they don't know is that the road is leading them to prison. They also think that they will not get caught. Guess what they always do.

Lauren Smith - 8th Grade
Centennial Middle School - Teacher, Amanda Peterson

Our Problems with Youth Violence

What is youth violence? What does it mean? Is it school children fighting over the best swing on the playground? Is it junior high kids arguing about who has the most money? Is it high school students fighting over who was making out with whose boyfriend or girlfriend in the hall after 3rd period? Is it just regular bullying? Could it be child abuse? I think that the answer is yes. Youth violence is a very interesting subject and can be seen in many different ways.

As I see it there are many different reasons youth violence can occur. Some examples are bullying, child abuse, gangs, suicides, drug abuses, alcoholics, emotional instability, gossip, jealousy, and putdowns. Some people abuse others because of these things. When I see or here about more abuse, violence and hatred in the world I always feel like I should be able to do something. Deep in my mind I know I can. And so can everyone else.

Throughout my life youth violence has occurred a number of times even if I didn't realize it. I used to and still do constantly fight with my siblings. So much as a joke can go way too far down the line, and it can turn into a war with scratches, blood, bruises, and sometimes teeth marks. I realize now that this was not necessary I could have prevented it in various ways. Like choosing not to lose my temper, ignoring the problem, or saying that I didn't want to pick a fight.

Physical violence is not just the only type that can hurt someone. Words can also be hurtful. The quote "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can't hurt me"- Author Unknown; is a simple way of parents telling their children to not worry about what other people think of them, but down the line, words can often get very cruel and upsetting. This type of violence is one often used when somebody doesn't feel secure enough about themselves and picks on others to make themselves feel better. I remember being in elementary school and always being made fun of by the other girls because I was a Tomboy and didn't like pink very much. I would come home crying from school almost everyday and bury my face in my pillow and fall asleep. This continued until I learned to fight back, which, now that I look back on it was not the best idea. This only created more problems among me and the other girls. By going through this I hurt myself and the others I always snipped back at.

One of my least favorite things that kids are bullied about is their ethnic background, their race, color, or religion. No one can help the color of their skin, no one can control where they come from, and no one has the power to choose the religion that they were raised as a part of. The conflict is that people don't know how to go about something that is different or to look past the outside of someone, they need to look farther inside and actually get to know and understand people before they get to judge them.

Another type of violence I constantly hear about it suicide and emotional abuse. These people either abuse themselves by using violence or are abused by others for having this sort of unstableness. I have friends and peers that have had emotional problems and were made fun of for it and a lot of the time bullied because of their state of mind. I think this is wrong. Just because someone is part of a certain social group or

does certain things doesn't give others the right to insult them. Everyone is different and the world needs to learn how to accept that.

In my life I have seen and heard about a lot of drug usage and very heavy alcohol users. Some were not legal. This only makes the violence worse. The lack of control and change in attitude is frequently disappointing to friends and family. My mom had a really good friend who had been drinking and smoking a lot one night. He was said to have gotten into a fight with his wife also that night. He left the house with his shotgun and his wife's mother called the police on him because she was worried he was a threat to his wife and children at the time. Because of the alcohol he had drank, that night when the police asked him to drop the gun he did not and was shot and killed. He died that night and we think of him often. He was a good friend to both of my parents and the night he died caused a lot of grief for a lot of people. A lot of the time he was always there for my parents when they needed it. This is why I believe that alcohol and drugs are very immoral to the body and don't do any good.

A lot of physical violence is caused by people who are insecure with themselves. They feel like they need to prove themselves or they aren't good enough for something. Another cause for this is because of gossip or rumors that could have been spread about that person and they need to prove that whatever was said is not true. Or it is. Watching and hearing about the problems that go on because of this is always hard. More and more youth today also think that it's okay to hurt someone because they think that someone is not doing something correctly, or because they want a specific person to do something. This should never be a way to solve problems. In my opinion this is going against what America stands for.

When I hear that another kid has ended up in the hospital because of a gang fight, or my little brother is being bullied again, or the unfairness in 3rd world countries there's a certain feeling that I get about it. Something like an ocean of sadness. Like the stars won't be able to shine as brightly, the moon's illumination is dimmed, and the sun wants to hide away from it all. There's always a certain feeling. But I can only imagine the pain of the family members of that person who has been hurt or treated unfairly. No one should have to live with that sort of pain. Knowing that their son or daughter, brother or sister, cousin, best friend or anyone else you are close to has been mistreated and you never did anything about it must be a lot to handle. I know that in my life it has been a personal issue and a scar that never quite heals all the way through.

The question still remains: What is youth violence? There is no right or wrong answer. There's no specific response that should be spoken. The general idea is that of the youth of today are not treating each other the way they should. If we could all learn to get along, to accept the fact that people are different, to not judge by the looks of someone else, and to just not question who people are but maybe try to just understand the way another person thinks the world wouldn't be perfect but it would be better. And that I know for a fact.

Rachel Stevens - 7th Grade
Cedar Ridge Middle School - Teacher, Sherese Merrill
Persuasion

Have you ever experienced youth violence? Youth violence happens all around the world. What most people don't know is that they can help stop it.

But first, do you know some of the causes of youth violence? There are many causes of youth violence. Here are a few. Children could be raised in a violent environment, children could have been abused, they could have something horrific going on in their life, kids who feel picked on sometimes fight back, kids on drugs, etc. So as you can see there are plenty of causes of youth violence.

Quite a bit of people have experienced youth violence. This is not a good thing. If almost everyone has experienced youth violence that means there is a lot of it going on around the world.

I have experience with youth violence but I would like to use someone I know as an example. About eight months ago I moved to South Carolina because my dad got a very good job there.

I moved to the Charleston area and in that area there are a lot of gangs and violence everywhere. There were three different schools that my siblings and I went to and they were, The Laurel Hill Primary School, Cario Middle, and Wando High. From experience we know that all the school's had violent abuse going on.

In my school lots of fights would go on around the whole campus. We were always hearing of some kind of violence. Once I even remember one of my classmates being thrown by one of the football players and breaking quite a few ribs.

But one of the worst things that happened, seemed to happen at my brother's High School.

Ward, (which was the high school) was the worst out of all our schools. I have never seen so much violence and bad things go on at one time. There were suicides, hangings, harassments, drugs, etc.

One of the most memorable things that happened was actually pointed at a teacher, by a student. The student said that she despised the teacher and did not want to do all the assignments that he thought necessary.

The teacher told the student that all the assignments were necessary and that she had to do them. That's when she got extremely angry; she took her belt off and started beating the teacher. After she had finished the teacher ended up in the hospital for something like three days. He had lost some teeth, broken some ribs, and was pretty banged up.

Being in a place like that has affected my life deeply. I know that that people should not be treated in ways like this. When I become a parent I will make sure that my children are not abused like many children are today. It is not kind to use violence to make people do what you want, it's not nice to use violence just because you think it is fun.

There are things you can do to stop youth violence. Some times just talking to someone who is using violence can help. Tell them that it hurts your feelings and others when they are mean to people. Most of the time they will stop if not then you should use the three step guidelines.

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