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UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO  
**Do the Write Thing**

*Student Writings*  
**2011**

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice





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**Do the Write Thing 2011 VIP Judges**

Bonnie Jean Beesley  
*Beesley Foundation*

Reverend Dr. France A. Davis  
*Calvary Baptist Church*

Ronald B. Gordon Jr., Executive Director  
*Utah Commission on Criminal & Juvenile Justice*

Laurie Hart  
*Callister, Nebeker & McCullough*

Jeremy Holm  
*Bobsled Athlete – Head Coach of the U.S. Adaptive Bobsled Team*

Christina Lowe  
*Miss Utah 2010*

Derek Parra  
*Olympic Gold & Silver Medalist*

Mira Reynolds  
*Do the Write Thing National Finalist 2009*

Mark Shurtleff  
*Utah Attorney General*

Judge Andrew Valdez  
*Third District Juvenile Court*

**Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee**

- Adam Cohen
- Spencer Larsen, Chair
- Holly Martak
- Rachael Skidmore

**Staff**

- Reg Garff
- Jo Lynn Kruse
- Cuong Nguyen

UTAH'S ELEVENTH 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 (JJDP) as reauthorized in 2002. The Board is also responsible for administering federal funds appropriated through the JJDP, to fill 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 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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 2,900 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence. More than 1,100 chose to submit essays for review. The Salt Lake City Police Department and students from the University of Utah and Utah Valley 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 National Finalists 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*

*Lynna Landroché*  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, North Layton Junior High School  
Teacher, Elaine Smith

*Riley Pierce*  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Highland Junior High School  
Teacher, Kim Irvine

Lynna Landroché - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
North Layton Junior High School - Teacher, Elaine Smith

It does not matter who you are,  
Things in your life will be amiss.  
Adding violence only leaves another scar,  
I, myself, have dealt with this.

In my gym class last year,  
I had been falsely accused.  
A girl's intentions, though unclear,  
Made me feel so bruised.

I no longer wanted to go to class.  
I was so full of fear,  
Of how she might harass,  
Or the cussing I might hear.

Even though the conflict is no more,  
These troubles have no cure.  
The memories resurface when I see her,  
And I just have to endure.

I can no longer be the same,  
For through these times I have changed.  
But I do know that hope is an ever-burning flame,  
So in the end everything turns out okay.

Why do people do these things?  
Why is this violence all around me?  
There are many reasons for these happenings,  
Like depression, anger, pain, and jealousy.

Unfortunate as it may be,  
A lot of this originates in the home.  
Violence there seems to spread,  
To where ever the teenager may roam.

It may be abuse,  
From a parent or another.  
But it still leaves a bruise,  
And causes dreams to shatter.

If we team up together,  
We can help stop this.  
We can be a barrier,  
Blocking what seems to be amiss.

I, too, can help prevent the violence,  
If I try my best.  
To go the extra distance,  
To be an example to the rest.

But most of all, I can stand up for others,  
And tell them that I care.  
I can spread the word of hope and love,  
And of the violence, make others aware.

We all need to team up,  
And leave nobody out,  
Refrain from gossip,  
And forget about doubt.

Because if we do,  
The world would be a better place.  
All hatred we must undo,  
This cause we must embrace.

Riley Pierce - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Highland Junior High School – Teacher, Kim Irvine

“Gay”, “faggot”, “homo”, etc. these are the cruel words I have had to endure on a daily basis. At first when I heard these words I ignored it, and thought oh well. I wondered why, just because I took pride in the way I dressed and how I did my hair I was called these horrible words. I liked girls and have a lot of friends that are girls. I did not understand that just because I did not want to be sexually active people thought these things of me. I wondered when nasty, hateful words came from more and more people, what I was doing wrong. Eventually I had a façade. On the outside I was happy, but on the inside, I felt like I didn't belong in this world. When my friends and family started to say those same words, just playing and joking, I went along with it. The words I was being called were exponential. I told myself “I guess there comes a point when I just have to lose my façade because it hurts too bad to hold on to, and I don't necessarily want to be happy, I just want to stop feeling miserable.” I shut down. People told me to tell my bullies how I felt. I did not want to see these people or yet tell them how I felt. I was stuck.

*“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.”*

~Dr. Seuss~

*“Anger is the enemy of non-violence and pride is a monster that swallows it up.”*

~Mohandas Gandhi~

Youth violence is a critical problem in today's society. Youth violence is a physical or verbal act against another teen or peer. Youth violence sometimes starts with someone that is insecure in oneself that is bullied by others. There are many kids and teenagers bullying or being bullied every day and night. There are many types of bullying. Physical bullying is a physical force against another person. One of the worst kinds of bullying is emotional bullying. Emotional bullying is something said verbally to you or towards another person. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. I am opposed to this saying because bones and wounds can always heal, but a broken soul or a break in your self confidence may never heal and the words will never be forgotten.

Cyber bullying is another very cruel way to bully someone. Because once a negative or hurtful comment is posted it is out there for the world to see forever. Many kids and teens have committed suicide because of what people have posted online.

You can also bully yourself. One of these ways is to cut yourself, which can be very dangerous. People often cut themselves in an attempt to relieve the pain they feel after what a bully has said to them, sometimes a “cutter” feels a need to feel physical pain that mirrors the aggression the bullying makes them feel on the inside.

A cruel smile

I could not let them see me cry.

Now more and more start to participate.

As they stood there laughing and bullying me.

They think it's funny but I would have to disagree.

They see my one single tear.

And now there cruel smile starts to appear.

Tears are the safety valve of the heart when too much pressure is laid on it

~Albert Smith~

As the years went by the harsh words still continued. I had a lot of anger balled up inside of me. I could not take any more of their malicious behavior. These bullies created a bully that was out for vengeance. I started to call people unimaginable names. I actually resorted to violence. For once it wasn't me getting bullied, and it felt good.

The monster inside me.

I hate what I was.

The victim of fear

Now I hate what they made me

Going from

Bullied

To

Bully

One day I opened my eyes and realized what I had become. I could barely stand to look at myself. I hated the way people treated me, and yet I was treating people the exact same way. It was ambiguous to me why I was treating people this way. It was really pathetic. I knew that I had to stop treating people this way, because I knew personally that it really truly hurts. One thing that inspired me was this Quote from Mohandas Gandhi. "*Be the change you want to see in the world.*" Once I heard this I started to be the change I wanted to see. I stopped being a bully and I felt really good about that. Although people did not stop bullying, I learned to deal with the fact that it was never going to stop. And I am ok with that because I know who I am and what my ideals are.

I know what is like to be bullied and to bully, and either way it really hurts. The way I am going to change the cycle of youth violence is when I see someone being bullied I am going to step in and be a friend. I'm not just going to be a friend to the bullied, I will be a friend to the bully. Everyone needs a friend.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO  
**Do the Write Thing**

*Runners Up*

*Joseph Aratari*  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Oquirrh Hills Middle School  
Teacher, Torrey Longeteig

*Lexi Monson*  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Mont Harmon Junior High School  
Teacher, Colleen Wilson

Joseph Aratari - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Oquirrh Hills Middle School - Teacher, Torrey Longeteig

**Bullying, What It Can Do**

Bullying, verbal or physical, is a huge issue inside our elementary, middle, and high schools. Students can get bullied in our hallways, playgrounds, on school buses, and even inside our classrooms. Bullying causes long lasting effects on a person's life. It can affect you and make you more self-conscious, lower your self-esteem, and alter your education and career choices. You can be bullied on a number of things, your height or weight to your religious beliefs and race. Bullying is a serious matter and it is something we all need to take more seriously.

I myself was bullied all through elementary school. I was picked on by people who I thought were my friends and classmates. They picked on me because I was more serious about school and because I wasn't a part of their football or basketball teams, or because I chose to do other things instead of playing football at recess. I was coming home everyday frustrated and upset with myself because I wasn't like the "boys" and it was not until 4<sup>th</sup> grade did I decide enough was enough. It was not until I joined karate that I had the confidence and I actually felt good about myself, then I decided to talk to my parents. They went and talked to the administration at my school the very next day and fortunately my school did not tolerate bullying and they took care of the matter in no time. But unfortunately, bullying is not taken as a serious matter in many schools and sadly the victims pay the consequences.

The most frequent response to, "What I'm I suppose to do, I'm being bullied?" is usually, "Just ignore them" or, "Walk away and pretend that it didn't bother you". However, in reality you can't walk away and ignore them and pretend it didn't bother you, you need to do more. You can try and make new friends that won't bully, that you can go to when you are feeling down, or

get involved in an extracurricular activity, and have that time just to think of yourself and your accomplishments. That is exactly what I did. I joined karate and a cooking school. When I had a tough day at school, I couldn't wait to go and be around the people that enjoyed doing what I liked to do. However, even though my parents talked to the administration at my elementary school and I was a part of karate and cooking class, I was still getting bullied. I would talk about what I learned at karate and what I had cooked for dinner, and they would think I actually had a life. However, because I was still one of the smartest students in class that would give them the reason to still torment me. It was then we talked to the school again, and we decided that I would be attending a school with news students and who actually cared about their education. It wasn't until then I was never bullied again.

To this day, I still am affected by the bullying I went through in elementary school. I am self-conscious of everything I do. Whatever project I do in school has to be perfect or I won't accept it. My classmates would tease me and I thought they were actually making fun of my intelligence or lack of it, in their opinion. Also, I am a little afraid to go into the local grocery store, just in case I might bump into one of my old classmates. Luckily for me bullying did not affect my education, but for some it does affect their education and that can lead to changing a career choice or your choice in friends. It has been proven that physical bullying is more commonly associated with boys and verbal with girls. However, both boys and girls do think of suicidal thoughts or actions if the situation is serious and is not taken care of, and that boys are four times more likely to succeed in committing suicide. (Harpaz, Beth. "Bullying can be a red flag for depression 'Trash talk' on Tv may be teaching kids insults are OK." *Associated Press* 21 April 2010: n. pag. Web. 20 Dec 2010. [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36688350/ns/health-kids\\_and\\_parenting/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36688350/ns/health-kids_and_parenting/).) These numbers need to change, they need to go down and fast. However,

it is not going to happen unless schools and parents at talk to their children about bullying and how big of a problem it is.

Bullying is a serious matter that has been not been taken serious enough in our elementary, middle, and high schools. It can cause long lasting affects that if the situation is serious enough, could lead to suicidal thoughts or actions. We must do more than just telling the victims to ignore the bullies; we need to do more to help the victims. Just like I did, taking part in after school activities and being around people I felt comfortable, gaining confidence to talk to my parents and the administration at my school. Because of that, I will never be bullied or picked on again. However, bullying will not stop unless parents talk to their children about bullying and how serious it is, and to support those who are the victims.

Lexi Monson - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Mont Harmon Junior High School - Teacher, Colleen Wilson  
Violence

As I walk in, an uneasy feeling comes over me.  
The sounds of violence are echoing all around me.  
Should I run? Or stay to help the bullied ones?  
I hear footsteps behind me. As I turn around I see  
them. The main bullies of the school. A sudden fear  
comes over me and all I can think to do is yell for help.

Help! I can get out, this trap has caught me.  
Violence has caught me like a fly in a spider web.  
It is almost impossible to get out.  
I see it at school at home and at the park.  
I just can't get away from it.

What is violence? Many people answer this question in words like fighting, punching, and wars. These are all high levels of violence, but violence is much more than that. It includes bullying, child abuse, drug abuse, gangs, alcoholism, prejudice, and many other actions that are occurring in today's society. Violence affects people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity or religion. The young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness to the violence. Some violence such as bullying, hitting or slapping can cause more emotional harm than physical harm. The violence that occurs in today's society is never helpful, and it is getting worse.

Violence has had an indirect influence in my life. I have been in contact with violence before, but it has not been very serious. I have seen violence at school and home, but have almost never been the victim or the offender. I have always tried to have a positive attitude and befriend everyone I meet. In some cases, that I am sure I have not realized yet, I have been the offender. Not purposely but by accident. It doesn't matter if I have purposely bullied or have just witnessed the violence I am still a part of it and I let it happen. I can say that I have been a

witness before, and I can admit that I have been the one who just stood there and watched the violence happen. The bullying got out of control and a few people got hurt really bad. Ever since that day I have always tried to stop it before it starts.

When violence occurs in families, it can result in divorce, child abuse and drug abuse. It saddens me that this is occurring everywhere at any moment, and I cannot stop it right away. After the violence occurs, the parent or child can feel very upset and depressed and this could even end in suicide. We need to realize that our families are just there to help us, and that we need to appreciate it. Violence in my family has occurred between my parents, my sisters and me. Sometimes we don't mean for it to get out of hand, but it ends up happening anyway. My advice to families in this situation would be to love each other and realize that they love you too. You have to accept it and not take for granted the freedom that your parents give you.

I believe that there is not a way to or get rid of violence completely. But, there are steps to preventing violence they include: hanging out with good friends, being respectful at home, and watching what you say and do. We all need to do our best to help prevent violence. It is going to be hard, but the world would be so much better without violence. We just have to take it one step at a time. That doesn't mean I need to go out and do this massive project to end violence. Just do small things daily to prevent violence. The small things I do will end up being a big influence for people to do more.

Violence is a big issue in our society so let's all take action and what we can to help prevent violence. If we all do the best we can, the world will be much more peaceful and who knows, maybe our influence will influence the whole world. Do not just sit there and quarrel with family members, stop and go play a friendly game. Things like this will help with preventing violence. Family and friends cannot prevent violence for you, or go to school and make sure no one hurts you. It has to be the individual. So take the time and do something to prevent violence right now.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO  
**Do the Write Thing**

# *State Finalists*

*Aaron Fassler*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Midvale Middle School  
Teacher, Jennifer Romney**

*Jeremy Hernandez*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Linda L. Lujan**

*Forster Matherly*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Treasure Mountain  
International School  
Teacher, Sharon Maddux**

*Joseph Noorlander*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Highland Junior High School  
Teacher, Brookanne Booth**

*Bovey Rao*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Midvale Middle School  
Teacher, Jennifer Romney**

*Krysten Robinson*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Desert Hills Middle School  
Teacher, Elise Shepherd**

*Cheryl-Lynn Uiváa*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Desert Hills Middle School  
Teacher, Elise Shepherd**

*Kassidy Whitney*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Highland Junior High School  
Teacher, Brookanne Booth**

Aaron Fassler - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Midvale Middle School - Teacher, Jennifer Romney

## Violence: an Escalating Issue

Imagine a world where people would have no reason to fear each other. Wouldn't it be awesome? Everyone would have the best time of their lives, no matter who they were! It would be a better world all around, a world a million times better. But sadly, this is not that world. There are many forms of violence, and they are *all* big issues.

I believe all types of violence affect my life in one way or another. Some types I have experienced personally and some affect me indirectly. I have, most directly, experienced bullying at school. I think people single me out sometimes because I am sensitive and because they see me as a nerd. I believe it's really unfair, and I fight back their words, but that makes them want to give me more and I have to live through it. Bullying has very bad effects on both the bully and the one being bullied. Studies show that boys who bully in middle school were 4 times more likely to have a criminal conviction before age 24. They are also more likely to drop out of school, start smoking, and have issues with drug abuse. I actually pity the bullies for these reasons. Kids who are bullied may be afraid to come to school, ride the bus, or be alone in the hallway. These fears can lead to anxiety, depression, and even thoughts of suicide. An indirect way violence affects me is by the thoughts of people around me. I try to stay away from brutal movies, TV shows, and websites, but many of my peers do not. Our society has become desensitized toward violence, and the problem is spreading slowly.

Youth violence has countless causes, many of which cannot be explained easily. Mental stress and household issues can have complicated effects on the brain. I believe the main cause of youth violence is the feeling of control. People get high on the ladder of popularity and want to get higher and higher. Bullying makes them think that they are going up a rung on that ladder. Sometimes it may be through no fault of their own. They may be experiencing abuse at home and torment others simply to let out their feelings of neglect and insecurity. I have also seen that bullies may do what they do to make up for something lacking. They might be overweight, or short, or they might be of a different race than the people around them and feel alone. I have known many bullies such as those. People even may be bullied themselves and release their negative feelings by being violent towards others, too.

Sometimes the best way to help out to fight against youth violence is to offer a helping hand, a shoulder to lean on, or someone to talk to. People who are victims of violence feel alone and insignificant, and one of the best ways to make them happy again is for them to know that they have a pal. I have struggled with these bad feelings, and I know that the thing that made those feelings all but disappear was my friends. They offered me consolation in a way that no one else could. The best way to help yourself is to reach out to others, even to the counselors at school. The *very reason* that they are there is to help you out. Never shy away from help, and you will always have a way to stop the violence harming everyone.

Jeremy Hernandez - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda L. Lujan

The Past, Present and Future

Do you remember being young

Before all this ever begun

Do you remember loving life?

Before every teen had a pocketknife

I can sure as hell remember

When you didn't have to dismember

Or even end someone life

who wasn't a member

Of a certain group club or even a gang

Driving around town looking for trouble

In their fancy new mustang convertible

Not responding to a situation like reasonable people

They see you hanging with your gang or group

Then they look at something dangling from your shorts

A symbol of their group

There just standing there

Not trying to stoop to the level of anyone else

Minding their own business

Not trying to get in a fight with anyone

But the other group disagrees

They want to see them cry and hide

In terror and shock

Not caring or worrying about being locked up  
They get out of the car ready to cripple and crack  
They start to attack as soon as they throw the first whack  
You know there's no going back  
Then suddenly you hear a loud bang  
The last thing you remember or recall of the scene  
Is them driving off knowing the killed another human being  
Acting like nothing happened going on with life aging  
And pacing for the day they get that bang on their door  
See what I mean and this is still going on today  
Trying to lure you into doing something hardcore  
Then you remember them before  
They got tricked into violence and crime  
Sometimes you wish they would stop all this  
Hating and revenge trying to avenge  
A friend or sending a message  
To someone else saying your going mess them up  
What's that going to do?  
It just going to just make thing worse  
To hurt and to get the dirt on a innocent person  
Making such a big effort trying to make it work  
Then when it happens they do it again  
And again and again and again  
Se this has got to end before we all spend

Life in DT, jail or even prison  
Wishing and regretting  
Ever getting involved with  
Gangs, violence and crime  
Spending your entire lifetime locked up in a cell  
You wanna know the truth  
About what's really affecting our youth?  
Let me explain in a simple way  
See mostly because they don't want to look dumb  
Hanging with thugs who make the problems worse  
Hating and loving to curse ever moment of the day  
Letting them talk you into something is kinda like venom  
It'll spread through your whole body  
Then you get consumed with the urge to hate and curse  
Wishing to reverse and start a new  
But you can't stop  
And it just consumes your life  
Until you cant take no more  
And you want to end it all  
But then you realize  
The lies and lies  
You been told by those guys  
Who made you into something your not  
But stop

You know you'll get jumped by those punks  
Worrying about the them coming after you  
Betraying and getting slayed or hurt  
Not getting persuaded or talked into violence and drugs  
You can do the same  
Don't be afraid  
To just say hey I not going to do this  
Getting dissed and being called a woosy  
Isn't the worse thing that can happen  
You see them just swearing and rapping  
Tempted to join the action  
But then you know  
You don't need to lead a life of crime and drugs  
Hanging with the wrong people  
Making life lethal and hell  
For everyone else  
Youth violence has affected me on so many ways  
I just want to make a difference  
Don't want people sentenced and convicted  
Just want all these streets gang free  
For you and me  
An our society  
The future of the world could change  
Without youth violence today

Forster Matherly - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Treasure Mountain International School - Teacher, Sharon Maddux

### Live Your Own Life

Everywhere I turn I hear it, see it, and feel it ... the rude comments, the dirty looks, I endure hate that radiates in every single part of my body. What did I do? That's the one thing I may never know. They hate me... and no matter how hard I try not to, I care what they think. It seems that every part of my life has become a tabletop discussion, nothing is personal anymore and people are beginning to know more about me than even I knew. Some apologize, they say they were talking without thinking and they shouldn't have said anything. They think it will be that easy to gain back my trust, but faith in others is something that takes a long time to build up. Apologizing won't take back the words that should have never been said.

Everybody is not only a victim, but also a predator when it comes to youth violence. Every single person knows both sides... and either one is demeaning to your self confidence. Does saying rude things about others actually make you feel good about yourself? To me, the Audrey Hepburn quote "For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone." Says everything you need to know about bullying. Making someone feel ashamed of what they are doesn't make you beautiful, It makes you a superficial monster.

So if people don't do it for beauty...why do they do it? To gain the respect of others? Well, to gain respect from others, you must first respect yourself. If you need to treat others horribly to gain friendship, that really says something about not only your confidence, but also the self confidence of the people you hang out with. It really shouldn't be socially acceptable to talk about others, honestly it's a waste of time and can only hurt yourself and others. It may not be physical, but gossiping and harassing often lead to worse things, like violence.

Bullying is a poison that infects everyone around you, once you start a negative attitude toward someone it spreads and spreads. Some people are different, and everyone needs to learn how to embrace the worlds beautiful variation. My new years resolution was to not only stop talking about others, but also to stop caring what other people say about me. If they care enough about me to waste their time gossiping about me, then that means I'm already better than they are. The way I plan on stopping youth violence is to just stop saying rude things about other people, because there really isn't enough time in this short life of mine to be caught up in how other people are living their own.

Joseph Noorlander - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Highland Junior High School - Teacher, Brookanne Booth

I was glad to find out about the essay on violence because although I haven't had to deal with bullying or school violence too much, my sister has. The day I got this assignment, she came home from schooling in tears and sobbing because a boy in her class had called her "fat," "ugly," said she "stinks" and other horrible words that I can't write down.

It made me feel sad and angry to see my sister upset like that. She is pretty but a little bit bigger and taller so she gets called "fat" and "amazon" and people say she takes steroids. Sometimes she doesn't want to go to school because she is so scared about being bullied. My sister is tough and it takes a lot to make her cry; so when she does, I know she is really upset.

My mom used to be a cop and she says that kids bully because maybe they are being abused at home and somehow it helps them feel powerful or in control to hurt others. That's sad but other kids shouldn't have to suffer and dread going to school because of it.

Our school has a "bully box" where you can put someones name in as being a bully - but then they call in the bully, tell them who ratted on them and then kids get "jumped" and beat up.

I think the "bully box" is good but, if a name is in there, school officials should confront that person and notify their parents but not say who told on them.

Then, school personnel, teachers, counselors, school officers, make it a point to watch that person, especially when the bully is in the same class with the victim. One chance is all the bully should

get without punishment, just a warning but after that, severe consequences should follow any further referrals in the bully box.

The school should have no tolerance bullying policies after one warning.

Maybe, if the victim's family wanted to, a mediation could be provided with both kids and their parents there and a counselor to try to resolve the problem.

Kids have killed themselves or other people because they have been bullied. Some, boys especially, grow up to be violent because they were bullied or, the root of the problem, they grew up in a home where they were abused, bullied or witnessed domestic violence.

My aunt, my mom's sister, and her friend were murdered by my aunt's ex-husband who grew up in an abusive, domestic violence home.

So probably, after identifying a bully the school should look

into what is going on in that kid's home.

Identifying, communicating and punishing the bully is all good but only if the root of the bullying is also identified and corrected. Otherwise, the bully behavior will never end.

**Bovey Rao – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Midvale Middle School - Teacher, Jennifer Romney**

Youth violence has sadly become a staple in schools across the country. Everyone has been influenced by its reach in some way. Youth violence is also one of the most misunderstood topics. Violence is not just physical harm. It can also occur mentally and spiritually. Gossip and occasionally being facetious can cause more harm to people than some can realize. In fact, mental wounds can be even more difficult to correct after the effects of violence. It has an extensive effect on the entire youth population. Youth violence has reached into my life immensely from when I was young until now.

When I was in elementary school, I didn't consider verbal bullying to be youth violence. I thought of it as simply being "mean." However, a lot of the insults and jeering stuck into my mind. It altered my opinions on me and others and lowered my self-esteem. In my opinion, verbal bullying can cause much longer lasting damage upon a victim. Still, as I grew older, verbal jeering lost its effect on me because I became familiar to it. I went from victim to being a bystander of youth violence. Now in middle school, I can see youth violence everywhere around me.

Whether it is unintentional or not, youth violence is a common sight around me. There are measures in place to prevent physical violence so therefore it is less common. Verbal and mental violence, however, is much more difficult to maintain and interpret. Oftentimes, people inadvertently offend others with crude comments or inconsiderate thoughts. Others purposely degrade people to content themselves. Many common quotes said today can cause immense damage onto a person. For example sayings like "Just kidding" and "Don't take this personally" can cause injuries in a person's life. Another form of verbal youth violence is gossip. Gossip can trigger extremely detrimental effects on a person. Students begin to worry about the opinions of

others. This can cause dramatic drops in self-esteem. I have seen the all of the effects involved in youth violence around me.

Youth violence can stem back to multiple reasons. First of all, youth violence can relate back to out of school places with large impact. Far-reaching mediums like the media are some of the leading reasons for youth violence to occur. Problems in the household and environment can also cause youth violence. However, I feel the two leading reasons for youth violence are extremely common in schools

Peers and simply ignorance are probably the two leading factors involved in youth violence. Peer pressure is one of the most villainous acts in schools. In order to “impress” friends and other peers, some people jeer at people at the victim’s expense. Peers can cause people to act irrationally and illogically to “fit” in with the others. Finally ignorance and misunderstanding can cause youth violence. Without fully understanding a topic or a person, people can immediately jump to conclusions which are untrue. There are many factors that can accumulate and add up to youth violence.

With youth violence becoming such a common issue, we need to take action against it. By simply stepping up and fighting for yourself and your friends, you can alter the environment immensely. I can help combat youth violence by being involved and standing up for your rights. While others may be craven and shrink away from the challenges presented, you need to challenge the forces going against you. Already, I try to prevent youth violence from occurring by stopping my friends. Small initiatives like this can prevent many other large issues that may arise. I can take action against the problem of youth violence in my life.

Youth violence has become a constant problem in schools. With the broad reach, it impacts everyone in some way. However, with the correct actions made, it can be isolated and prevented. Youth violence can be prevented completely and stop many future problems.

Krysten Robinson - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Elise Shepherd

### **The Violent Truth.**

Everyone agrees that violence hurts. Some might say it has a time and a place, I don't think that is true. Violence is something that should never be used. Nothing and no one deserves to have violence thrust upon them or waiting in the shadows. I don't think people even realize the true meaning of violence like Henri Nouwen said "Much violence is based on the illusion that life is a property to be defended and not shared." Everyone has a life, everyone has their rights, and everyone has a choice. It is your choice to be violent or let violence happen to you. I walk down the halls at my school and I see so many corrupt things. People getting shoved; their books falling to the ground. Students being called nerds because they are a genius and are trying to make something of their lives. Best friends going to separate classes, and their way of saying goodbye is calling each other sluts. Possessive boyfriends yelling at their girlfriends for hanging out with their guy friends. Unfortunately violence is as a part of our lives as talking. It's everywhere, and happens thousands or hundreds of thousands of times in a single day. Unfortunately you can't just wash off the mean things people do or say to you like you can dirt. It's like wrecking your car, you don't know how much damage is really done until you look under the surface. The damage could be so bad that you have a broken engine; a broken heart. Or your fuel pump has a leak; the thing that keeps you going is slowly dying.

Violence can come in more extreme cases believe it or not. For instance here is my friend's story: She was in her brother's room with her brother and his friend. Her brother had to leave to get something downstairs. While he was gone his friend tries to touch her but she won't let him. He tells her it is okay; she knows it is not. He tries to touch her again; she lashes out. She runs until she finds her brother. She tells him his friend makes her feel scared and uncomfortable. He asks why; she replies he tried to touch me. She was only 8 or so when this happened. What I think is the worst part, her brother's friend was only 15. That is only one year older than me. For me it is scary to think about because her brother didn't know that his friend was trying to do that to his sister, what if I don't know everything about my classmates, what if I am in the wrong place at the wrong time? It just goes to show that everyone has a secret life that no one knows about. Yet I do not think it was all his fault. I am not trying to defend him I know he should have stopped it and it is down right sick and unhuman what he tried to do. But remember what everyone always says "Don't judge a book by its cover." We don't know his whole story. Everyone always has a reason for doing what they are doing, no matter what they are doing.

Maybe he was acting out because he was lonely and depressed. Maybe his parents abused him too and that was all he knew. Maybe he didn't have parents or they just didn't care. Maybe he just has a sick and twisted mind. I don't know. What I'm getting at is even the bullies have feelings. They are just trying to find someone to love them too. That is all they really want. Someone to come home to and tell them that they are spectacular, that they are the most important thing in the world. And if they don't want love, or have just given up, they want to drag someone down with them, make someone just as miserable as

they are or worse than they are. Either way bullies simply just want attention so bad they are willing to do just about anything for it. Whether it is good or bad. They either want attention from their peers or their parents. Every kid that I know, even if they won't admit it out loud, wants the attention or approval from their parents. "Some people blame our generation, but have they ever stopped to think who raised us?" (Unknown).

If everyone was just aware of all of the violence in our lives, no matter how small, we could take action to change it. Everyone should try to do something different, if someone was shoved or knocked over, help them up, talking to someone who has little or no friends, treating the smart kids with respect because let's face it they probably know more than you do. And think about the words you are going to say before they come out of your mouth. If you call your bestfriend a slut what do you say to people you don't like? Realize what you saying. I bet if you looked up words that you would normally say to your friends in the dictionary the definition would not be what you thought the word meant. Anyway what I am trying to show you is that little things added up over a period of time can make a huge difference, even if we don't realize it yet. If a bully is bullying someone stand up for the kid that is getting pushed around. It is a lot better than just standing there watching. And talk to the bully, tell them what they did was wrong and let them know that you are always there if they ever need to talk about anything. You wouldn't think that talking to them would make a difference but look what you are reading now. Reading this essay has impacted your life. You are now more aware about violence than you were before you read this essay. After all "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind." ( Rudyard Kipling)

I don't think kids should want attention so bad that they just throw their lives away. Everyone just needs to take a step back and look at their situation before they try to do anything about it. Someone somewhere in the world always has it worse than you. Just because we live where we do and we have all of these rights doesn't mean it is okay to hurt another human being in anyway. Like J. Krishnamurti said "When you call yourself an Indian or a Muslim or a Christian or a European, or anything else, you are being violent. Do you know why it is violent? Because you are separating yourself from the rest of mankind. When you separate yourself by belief, by nationality, by tradition, it breeds violence. So a man who is trying to understand violence does not belong to any country, to any religion, to any political party or partial system; he is concerned with the total understanding of mankind." While writing this I realized how mean and cruel I was being to the people around me, even the ones I love. This world is too beautiful and our lives are too short to have any violence in them. Everyone should try to do something different, holding the door open for someone, talking to someone who has little or no friends. Little things added up over a period of time can make a huge difference, even if we don't realize it yet. As William Henry 'Bill' Cosby said "The main goal of the future is to stop violence. The world is addicted to it." As it should be. Do you have the courage to take the little step to prevent violence?

**Cheryl-Lynn Uivaá – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Elise Shepherd**

## The world we live in is filled with violence everywhere.

I never really pay attention to what goes on in life, like youth violence. I probably could relate to youth violence, but don't realize it. But now that I think about it, I do have some relationships. I've seen kids my age get bullied, or are involved in violence, but I don't pay attention to it, because it isn't any of my business. Sometimes, when I do see it, I can never get it out of my head. I ponder too much of such business that isn't mines. I think about how much it would hurt the persons' feelings, how much agonizing pain it gives to the heart. If I just dig deep into my feelings, I could relate to that person and to violence. I once, have been involved with youth violence. In my elementary years, I would get bullied by my skin color. The kids would call me black cow, and usually throw rocks at me. I would never tell my parents or anyone about that problem, because I think that they would never relate to it or understand what I am feeling. I take the pain out by crying every night in my bed. Letting it all out of my wrecking heart, but as time went by, and I got more mature, I started to learn from it and let it go. That's my story of youth violence, but other kids could have a whole different story.

Youth violence is a problem everywhere around the world. From my opinion, I think that some of the causes of youth violence are people. Not video games, music videos, or anything that relates to the media. Because it is the people on this earth. We are the ones that cause it, the ones that started it. We create things that would hurt our own kind. People's minds are like a recorder, when we say something cruel, another person may pick it up, and the brain would record it and hurt other innocent human beings. We say stuff that could hurt the heart of a person. It's just painful to think of what we do to each other. The cause of youth violence is us. Hard to think that we start monstrous things. Why do we do this? Because it's the only way a person could relieve stress, so they could feel much better.

We are living an animal's wild life. Where the strong people are the lions and the weak people are the zebras, or in other words, the lions' prey. The lions feed of the weak, the ones that won't fight back, the easy targets. It's how we live. We live as monsters, but there are some people in this world who have a heart, who actually care. We have to be that people, and make the monsters go instinct. If we just have the courage to stop this violence, then we could be living in a world full of peace and love. The world would be a safer place, where no one lives in fear. I would love to live in that kind of world. To make it happen, we will stop this ridiculous violence and love one another.

The thing that confuses me is why do teens tease their peers? Do they just tease out of the blues? Or when they have a bad day, they take it out on someone else? I guess it just makes them feel much better. To feel satisfied, but they should know that nothing in this world can satisfy us for long. We will have days where we feel like we want to die, and days where we feel like we can take the world, but the truth is we can never find what can make us fully happy. Kind of like what my cousin said to me, "You can be happy for a while, but soon it will fade away." So why do people do this? This horrible thing called violence? Because they are trying to find a

way to make themselves incredibly happy.

For myself to stop this problem, I will start being more friendly to everyone around me, be a friend to a bully, because if they see me being nice to them, they could really change and look at different problems in their life in a new light. I can make people think more positive, by just being kind to them. It's simple. I could help other people through hard times, and make them smile. I will be that person who would reach out to them and tell them that there is someone who cares. I can change this world to peace and make it to a better life. We all can change it.

Can you change it?

Kassidy Whitney - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Highland Junior High School - Teacher, Brookanne Booth

## Friends or Enemies?

Why was I born? Why should I be here?

It hurts like a thorn in your side

Misery, lurking in every corner

Telling you that you are a nothing a nobody

Youth violence, a tragic event that takes place every day. Young, helpless youth being hurt by others and in some cases their own family. No place to run no place to hide, pushed to the point of no return? Or is there hope, a light at the end of the tunnel?

There are many causes of youth violence but some of the most common are physical and mental. It can simply be caused by the victim being or looking different or the bully being abused at home and having to take their rage out on someone else.

You do have friends, people do like you! That's what they told her right before they shattered her into a million little pieces. They would be friends with her and then tell her how ugly and unpopular she was. She had no one else to turn to and all I would do is turn my head and try to forget about it. It didn't go away like a fly buzzing around your ear. She was just like everybody else on the inside but on the outside she was different, and that's why everyone despised her. Too scared to tell anybody but too strong to let them knock her down. After a year of this nonsense she found something that she had a passion for, and I was the only person that knew about it. She was an artist and she was amazing! She finally found what she was looking for, friends that loved to do the same thing that she did! Once she found those friends she was unstoppable like a freight train with no breaks. She found help for the bullying and is now as happy as she could ever be! Some stories can be sad or happy like this one, but either way it is hurtful and

Here are some scary statistics about youth violence:

- \* **Over 3 million reports of child abuse are made every year in the United States** (U.S. Department of Justice)
- \* **Twenty-eight percent of students ages 12 to 18 reported being bullied at school during the last 6 months. Of those students who reported being bullied, 24 percent reported that they had sustained an injury as a result of the incident.** (U.S. Department of Justice)

- \* **A recent report from the American Medical Association on a study of over 15,000 6th-10th graders estimates that approximately 3.7 million youths engage in, and more than 3.2 million are victims of, moderate or serious bullying each year. (NASP Resources)**
- \* **Nearly a third of all students age 12 - 18 reported having been bullied at school in 2007, some almost daily. (National Center for Education Statistics)**

Youth violence has affected my life in a positive way. It has shown me how serious youth violence is and how harmful it can be. It has also taught me how I can help the ones that are not so lucky and be happy for the ones that are. Also remember that youth violence does not only affect the bully and the victim but everyone around.

I can stand up for the victim and tell a trusted parent or adult. There are also many places that help with bullying like your school and youth counselors, the YMCA, the YWCA and BACA (bikers against child abuse). These organizations are advocates to end child abuse in the United States.

We can all take a stand against youth violence! We need to unite together because we can't win the war if we haven't won the battle.

*Utah Board of Juvenile Justice*

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