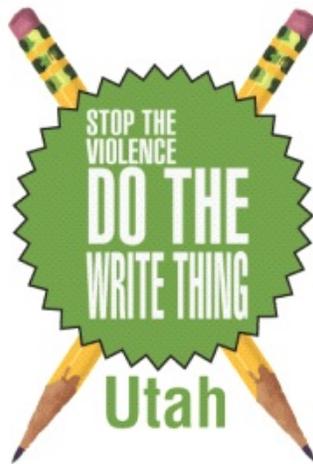


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UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO  
**Do the Write Thing**



*Student Writings*  
**2012**

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice





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**Do the Write Thing 2012 VIP Judges**

Bill Allred  
*X96 Radio*

Chief Chris Burbank  
*Salt Lake City Police Department*

Mayor Peter Corroon  
*Salt Lake County*

Ronald B. Gordon Jr., Executive Director  
*Utah Commission on  
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UTAH'S TWELFTH ANNUAL CHALLENGE TO

# Do the Write Thing

## **The Importance of the Do the Write Thing Challenge**

*The Do the Write Thing Challenge plays a key role in Utah's long-term strategy to end youth violence. These student writings make powerful proposals on how adults and community members can interrupt the causes of youth violence.*

Utah's *Do the Write Thing Challenge* works in cooperation with the National Campaign to Stop Violence. The first step to end youth violence is to talk about it. The *Do the Write Thing Challenge* makes this initial step possible by creating a platform for youth, giving them a voice about how violence affects their lives and how it can be prevented. The program empowers young people around the country to make a personal, written commitment to combat youth violence in their communities. It works because it targets youth violence in the communities where it takes place, then recognizes that the same communities hold the greatest power to create lasting solutions.

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 protections afforded in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA) as reauthorized in 2002. The Board is also responsible for administering federal funds appropriated through the JJJPA 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 3,100 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence. More than 1,400 chose to submit essays for review. Students from the University of Utah, Utah State University, Weber State University and numerous volunteers, participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top ninety-eight writings. The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice then selected the top twelve finalists, whose work was forwarded to Utah's VIP Judges for scoring. 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 students' 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*

*Joel Devy*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Brandee Bergum**

*Payden Trujillo*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, South Ogden Junior High School  
Teacher, Kim Irvine**

Joel Devy - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Elaine Smith

## *A Deed is a Seed*

*Once in a secluded corner  
in a secluded world,  
there was a normal boy  
who enjoyed life to it's fullest,  
He was a like good seed.  
He had the potential  
to do a lot of good in the world.*

*There was one problem though,  
He had not been born with many likable  
qualities.*

*Some children were fair,  
and were admired for their beauty.*

*Some children were smart,  
and were admired for their brain power.*

*Other children were funny,  
and made smiles wherever they went.*

*Some children were even liked  
simply for having some  
special talent.*

*However, this poor boy  
was neither fair,  
nor smart,  
nor funny,  
nor had any special talents.*

*But he didn't let that bother him at all.  
He remained like a good seed.  
Still having much potential to do  
good in the world.*

*As he grew older,  
the children around him began to see  
that he was of no worth,  
so they planted a bad seed.  
They pushed,  
shoved,  
mocked,  
teased,  
and excluded.*

*The boy began to see that  
if he was to avoid the bullying,  
he was going to have to  
adopt a new trait.  
Power.*

*And the bad seed planted  
by the bullying children grew.  
Every time the little boy met  
somebody he didn't like,  
was different,  
or got in his way,  
he expressed his power.*

*Certain other people around him  
began to grow sick of his bullying,  
and even though they had worth,  
they too, adopted the power trait.*

*And the bad seed began to grow  
infectiously,  
exponentially.*

And yet,  
Bullying continued to spread,  
until it had affected  
every part of society.

It affected everybody,  
everybody hated it,  
nearly everybody did it,  
anybody could stop,  
yet they didn't.

They just let the seed grow.

It was now society's biggest problem.  
And it started with a tiny action,  
as the first child chose  
to bully the other,  
and the other children joined in.

It starts with *you*.

It starts when the average person like you  
does a tiny, negative action,  
and plants a bad seed.

Instead of planting bad seeds,  
plant good seeds.  
Don't let the worst seed of all grow,  
by joining in on bullying.  
*Let it die.*

Help the good seeds grow,  
By responding to bad things  
with kindness.  
You never know when kindness,  
or a few words of inspiration  
can lead to something great

As one simple good deed is done,  
It puts one in a good mood,  
and gives them inspiration to do  
another deed.

Good seeds too,  
can grow infectiously,  
exponentially.

There is only so much room for  
seeds to grow in the world.  
If more good seeds are planted  
than bad ones,  
then the bad ones must eventually  
die out.

In fact, every preventable problem in  
the world, started  
like a bad seed.

Likewise, every good thing of the  
world  
started like a good seed.

You can solve the problem.

Instead of seeking power,  
seek to be a follower  
of good leaders.  
Instead of criticizing others,  
Support others.  
Instead of excluding others,  
Love and include them.

The seed of bullying started tiny.  
Yet it grew.  
Don't let it grow any more.  
*Just plant the good seeds.*

Payden Trujillo - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High School – Teacher, Kim Irvine

### Hidden Truth

#### Untrusted Love

You beat us down

You told the lies

Even still

You hear the cries

When Mom found out

Over the call

You came home

Storming through the hall

The whole house

Was swallowed by your hate

She tried to run

But it was too late

Violence is different in everyone's eyes. It could be an insult, a physical beating, or their own thoughts. No form of violence is ever right in any circumstance. Yet still, we live in a world where every day, people are insulted because of their race, their weight, how they look, or something like how they get something done. Something that people don't notice is when parents get divorced and what the children go through. When people make fun of others for things going on at home, it kills the person being made fun of inside. They lose trust in everyone. They break away from everything as they begin to believe the lies they've been told. Every day in the halls I hear, "What's wrong with you?" Things like that break my heart every single time I hear them. I've been in their place. Four years ago, my parents began to fight. Instead of just talking with my mom, my dad would yell, scream, and curse. One day he snapped. He pushed me down the stairs. I got up to see that my mom had called the police. My

father was in jail for child abuse. He beat me and my sister. I saw him hurt her. I can't even imagine having the audacity to do something like that to anyone. Hurting the innocent. Still, through the days of being bullied, one begins to feel pushed away and rejected. A loss of a "friend" or anyone in your life to violence, sometimes it can help you and everyone around you. It will always leave a memory, the person you knew before they began to bully. But you would never recognize the victim until you help them up.

Untrusted Love Cont.

His fists tense

Ready to strike

Forgetting the love he had for his family

Forgetting what was right

I used to look up to him

All I wanted to be

But now, at this moment

He was the last thing I wanted to see.

Seeing violence every day, some may just walk away. Those few who try to stop it, we forget to thank them. Some may say that the bullies are this way because of their past, TV, video games, or just being around it. I'm here to say, none of that is true! I know for a fact that I have insulted someone before. But I never add that to my list of daily intentions. Yes, I've been beaten, insulted, and rejected. I watch TV, and I'm around it every day. The only reason the bullies are bullies is because they choose to be. They want attention, and they usually get it! I believe that each junior high school should have more against the bullying. We should be taught to care more for those in need. Not just be told, "Bullying is bad, don't do it." Because those bullies heard those words, yet they still do it. To take action against them, we need to have the students taught to report it when they see it. Start a saying throughout the school that says you are against it and that you will help.

In elementary, I would always hear people say rude things about disabled kids. "They're so stupid!" They may not show their emotions as easily as you do, but when they hear the

bullies say those things, they do feel the hate. Each time an insult is repeated at anyone, disabled or not, each insult begins to fill their mind with those lies. They begin to see those as the truth. All people need to be helped up in some way or another. You can be the most popular person in school; you could be helped see what the least popular go through. Then YOU can go and help them up. Each time someone puts you down, then another brings you up you'll grow stronger against the insults and rumors.

Untrusted Love Cont.

She returned to school

And everyone knew,

All that had happened

But not what to do

Most pushed everything

She was away

But only the true

Would forever stay

Each day

The rejection and pain

Faded away

And exception was gained

Whether someone is bullied for years, months, or even just days, they won't ever forget those insults. Once people begin to show them kindness, the true person that is really inside them will start to show. Happiness is wanted worldwide. Just imagine; no wars, no homeless people begging for food on the streets, children not having to fear school. Anything at all, there are tons of hardships around the world. And they are all handled and felt differently by each person that experiences them.

No matter what side you're looking from, the bully, the witness, or the victim, we've all had those hard times. Bullies need to find another outlet, witnesses need to step up and help, and victims should stand up for themselves, but sometimes that's just too hard. That's when they need a true friend who will always be there to stand by them. If everyone had a true friend, the victims wouldn't let their lives go.

I wish that bullies could just see the fear in the victim's eyes. The reflection in the teardrop, the blood, everything they have caused. Intentions should always face good, but in the world we live in today, who's to show the bullies the right? My answer to that is everyone. Report it, help the victim, don't laugh, STAND UP for what you think is right. You never know when you'll need someone to stand up for you.

Untrusted Love Cont.

Over the years,  
Through each hill and turn  
There is always someone  
To help heal each burn  
  
It may not show quickly,  
But look at your past,  
What you've overcome  
And you're not the last.

Stand together  
Against the wrong  
For the power of love  
Is forever strong.

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

*Runners Up*

*Alborz Alimadadi*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, South Ogden Junior High**

**Teacher, Kim Irvine**

*Alexis Bennett*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Highland Junior High School**

**Teacher, Christina Orefice**

Alborz Alimadadi - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

## Because I'm Different

Fighting fire with fire only makes the flames stronger.  
In the victims eyes  
First the smirk,  
Then the words come with a barrage of suppressive spit that attacks like a rainstorm,  
Feeling of worthlessness that are like knives coming in with the words,  
Now in the Bully's eyes  
Right before he hits,  
He thinks,  
He sees himself in the victim's eyes,  
He remembers why he is bullying,  
He remembers being the victim,  
He knows he's making the flames stronger,  
But still,  
He attacks

I have seen many things, I have heard many things; I have witnessed things at my school that I should never see at age 13. I have seen Youth Violence in action; I have been the victim of Youth Violence. I am never the bully, but I am always the do-nothing bystander. I have also been the bully's friend. Some people say doing nothing is being worse than the bully; I am with that statement, because I stand there and do nothing. I have seen my best friend getting bullied, I have been bullied by my best friend. In my 13 years of experience I haven't seen much physical bullying. What I see is the bullying of words.

"An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind." –Mohandas Gandhi

The wind and snow is blowing,  
But no snow and wind can put out the fire in his words,  
The hatred that radiates from him  
All because I'm not as skilled as him,  
"You're horrible!"  
"This is the easiest thing in the world and you can't even do it?"  
"Go and learn something before you come and ski with me!"  
"Idiot..."

Those words, I will never forget. It was my 2<sup>nd</sup> time skiing and I was inexperienced, my best friend might of thought he taught me something, but all the yelling and arguing didn't teach me anything, expect for that friends are different around other people. The bully he was becoming, all because to show off.

I am Iranian and it doesn't make me different from other people, but my parents taught me to respect everyone and everything like they're my own brother. I believe that we are all brothers but just divided by the act of "coolness."

Youth violence happens everywhere. I walk down the hall and the first thing I hear is a swear word, or even fat, ugly, stupid. It's happening everywhere I go and I'm too petrified to stop it. Before new years one of my best friends was walking to his class, and I hear people behind him saying "where you going ugly?" I was right next to him, and even though he thought he didn't see me I know I saw a tear run down his eyes.

I see you right there,  
Taking all those words full of hate,  
I want to help,  
But I'm afraid I will be next.

"Oh man dude I can't wait to hang out with this girl can you come and help me out and get a date?" "Dude your a freaking nerd I hate you man how did you do that well on the final." "Freaking computer geek plays his stupid games all the time." These put downs might not seem bad at all, but when you are the person it's being told to your view of it changes. Dates, girls, jealousy all of these contribute to Youth Violence. The Youth Violence where I was the victim was when the bully used put-down words to impress a girl. Some girls don't like that; some girls love it when they see that they're man is better than all the others. So when the bully sees its working he doesn't play around anymore he's not faking it to impress the girl he's doing it for REAL. I have lost a great friend simply because he let the showing off go to far.

There is no need to give up now, I will never be the bystander again because I don't want lose another friend. I will think before I act. I will make myself the victim before I decide to say something that could be hurtful. I don't care if it will be me who will be bullied on next but what I wish for is that whomever I helped when they were in the time of need, they will do the same for me. One by one we can befriend the hated, befriend the bully's.

Fighting fire with fire only makes the flames stronger,  
Through the victim's eyes,  
It's the same person who bullied me before,  
I'm waiting for the hit,  
Through the bully's eyes,  
He sees his shadow in the victim's eyes,  
He remembers being the victim,  
He is about to give the blow,  
But now he's not fighting the fire with fire,  
He's not making the blaze stronger,  
He's helping to put out the blaze,  
He reaches over and helps me up,  
The once used to be bully is now my friend.

We can end this.  
United we stand, Divided we fall —Aesop

Alexis Bennett - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Highland Junior High School - Teacher, Christina Orefice

Just one more word you shout and spread about this weak individual to make yourself feel stronger, and to satisfy your anger for just a moment. I was the venerable victim, and this laughter all shunned towards me was finally too overwhelming to handle. I wanted to feel something, anything at all. School wasn't the only challenge I was facing though, it was walking into a heartless home every day.

To me 'family' was a fantasy I had never truly experienced, and then again I didn't want to either. It would've been just another thing I would soon have to overcome because to me nothing is forever. I hated my brother for putting me through pure hell every waking moment of my life. Whore, Slut, useless... just a few of his hurtful words personally reserved for me. This might be the part where you would think the dad would step in to set his boy in place, not in my case. I hadn't seen my dad in over 2 years, I didn't want to either. My father had a whole other second family to love and protect.

I was desperate to know I was still alive, I ran to the kitchen and scattered through the drawers searching for anything to make me feel pain. Then I came across a box of clean, basically new, untouched blades. Very lightly I glided the sharp metal against my wrist. Almost instantly I saw blood, and I actually felt something besides misery. It was almost as though all the hurt came seeping out of this slit I'd drawn with a blade. Finally I felt satisfaction but craving sleep.

Soon I found myself hurting myself daily but something I also noticed was the pain of my solution was fading. The cuts kept getting deeper meaning the scares of the ending result would be stuck on me for eternity. When my razor kryptonite had finally failed I was even more lost than before. I soon started to wonder what even the point of life was, only the brave survive and I was just a frightened teenager. Waking up every morning convincing yourself that today you will finally find your outlet when in reality you know you are filling your head with ineffective lies to keep you going.

My sign of existence was knowing I was still alive but it was gone, I persuaded myself I was better off dead. My life was now a frail thread holding up my fatal world. One more day past being called a whore, slut.... Useless all being said with no tone of remorse.

I was finished my thread that used to be a heavy rope had finally snapped. It wasn't pain I now wanted, it was death. Overdosage was the only thing I could think of. Numerous times I had heavily passed the warning labels advisory. I don't even know how I'm alive, so I took it as a sign I'm ment to make a impact on someone or something and life should go on.

But I was still depressed and I couldn't take this anymore. I couldn't find death. My last solution was to trust not only myself but others too. I talked, I cried, and I begged to my mom, the one person who is qualified to love me. I told her everything I'd done and put myself through I made sure she knew I wanted help. She listened above all the things and it was a warm feeling I wasn't expecting. She cried with me, and held my hand through every bit of it. From there I was forced to find myself, and yeah you may think this would be a easy task to face, but not when you cant even recognize yourself in the mirror.

Counseling, children phsicotrist, E.R trips... this was all taking place at one time and to me it was horrific, worse than suffocation, or being stuck in a small space and not being able to break free from, or even a fever you can't sweat out. Now my survival wasn't for me, I was doing this all for my mother. I loved her. You could torture me, kill me, take me to hell and bring me back just to keep a smile on her face.

I soon discovered all the stress, fear, and pain build up was hiding my talents such as writing and poetry. This was a piece I wrote while overcoming the healing process:

I am scared of life, I really am weak, I do have feelings, I live in fear of love but want it so terribly bad. I've had a habit of harming myself before, I know what being in a empty white room only to be filled with people who couldn't care less about you or your condition feels like, I've had my heart broken and pathetically enough it was almost the death of me. Then you pretend nothing ever happened and you don't even realize how far I've came from myself. I want to feel as though there is at least one person out there I mean the world to, honestly though, no one cares enough to stop and listen... just like the people in the plain white room...

Poetry and writing was my outlet. It gives me memories, it makes me feel talented and last it gives me satisfaction without pain. When you are depressed not only is it unhealthy, it hides your true talents. The number one thing that causes teen depression is bullying anywhere, school, maybe a group your in, church, and possible even your own home. The bully may feel weak so all of their built up anger is taken out on you. Some people resolve anger build up by being violent to other people who appear to be weak, physically or emotionally, others may eat past the normal human diet, and in my case, harming yourself. But WE control ourselves and actions. Words can hurt just as much as sticks and stones, maybe even more.

Find someone who will care about you and know you are not alone, sometimes you have to be the stronger person and lend them your hand first. make mistakes intentionally just to learn from them. Because if there is one thing I've learned from my whole experience was whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger. I am happier than ever and I learned the method to protect that so no one can take that away from me. If anyone comes to me in need either a close friend or complete stranger, I am the person to them I wished I had. Be the breakthrough in someone else's life, and they will love you in return, cause you never know when there life is on the line.

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

# *State Finalists*

*Breitton Adams*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Desert Hills Middle School  
Teacher, Leah Graham**

*Erika Cragun*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Highland Junior High School  
Teacher, Christina Orefice**

*Brittany Critchfield*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Mount Jordan Middle School  
Teacher, Nathan Elkins**

*Nathan Cummings*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, South Ogden  
Junior High School  
Teacher, Kim Irvine**

*Yassmin Peralta*

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

*David Quach*

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

*Shelby Reynolds*

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

*Ben Sherer-Lykes*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Treasure Mountain  
Junior High School  
Teacher, Julie Hooker**

Breiton Adams - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Leah Graham

### Walk Away

Help! Please stop, No! Please! Please! These are the crying words I can barely remember from a violent memory long ago. Those memories are painful, heartbreaking, ugly, embarrassing and frightening to think about. Violence can be many things. To some it may be an abusive relationship at home, to others it may be a school bully, to someone else, it may be a battle to survive in an inner city gang and to many others, it may be the wars and threats of terror our country faces from enemies around the world. According to the Oxford Universal Dictionary, violence is “the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or damage to a person or property; and the force or strength of physical action.” It is also defined as a “forcible, powerful motion, destructive force or capacity.” Violence means to act with severe intensity, excessive or extreme feeling or passion of words, anger or fury and is usually loud, disruptive, and dangerous and causes intense fear.

Though it may have been over ten years ago, I still can recall the feelings of fear I had for my mother’s safety and for all of us kids. My father had an extremely violent temper that was connected to his drug problem. My mother tried everything from counseling and doctors to rehab for my father, but even when the drugs were finally gone from his system, he had lost the ability to be calm and work through his feelings. Like Plato said, “The greatest penalty of evildoing - namely, to grow into the likeness of bad men.” That is exactly what had happened to my father. In

order for my mother to keep us all safe, she got a divorce and a protective order that is still in effect. I know it wasn't easy for my mother, but I am grateful that she found the courage to take the steps necessary to protect us from his violence. We have grown up without him in our life, and thankfully without his terrible examples and without the fear and anxiety of wondering when and if we would ever be safe.

If you took a trip to an African Jungle, you would be able to see a whole kingdom of animals behaving like they do in nature. Violence is a part of every living thing's way of life. Animals fight and kill to get food, to mate, to protect their young, to control each other, for status or to conquer fear or to just survive. Similarly, people do exactly the same things. Bullying is like a dog wanting to become the alpha-male. It is insulting to our intelligence that we can't see how we are being just like animals, but bullying is so common in our schools. Kids perceive a situation and react. The natural reaction is usually not the most peaceful, non-violent, or loving response. The youth of today likes things that can actually cause more violence; like watching violent shows or movies, playing violent video games, listening to music with negative lyrics and watching YouTube and other internet sites that encourage violent or daring and outrageous behavior. Kids often want to copycat the things they see – to either become popular, famous or to get attention. Being exposed to violent games and movies desensitizes people and when real situations come up, they don't have a natural alarm at the violence that they normally should. Not to mention, having an abusive relationship or poor examples at home, along with substance abuse and crime not

only increases the chances of violence, but multiplies the effects many times.

My Grannee says, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I believe that is especially true about violence. To prevent a violent situation can stop so much harm and destruction from ever happening. As children grow up, it is important for kids to have good examples of calm responses to conflict and to learn to control their anger, and think clearly, in order to handle any violent feelings or thoughts that may seem natural, but are more like animals and are far from right or good. One thing my mom taught me is to "Walk away." She would always say "Walk away" when something would come up between my sisters or me. It now has a place in my memory that really helps me. One day at school this year some boys wanted to fight me. I remember standing there and for a few seconds I was ready and filled with determination to fight them, but then my mother's words "Walk away" rang in my mind and I turned and left. I stayed out of trouble, I didn't get hurt, I didn't hurt someone else and I didn't disappoint my mom. That was the best part of all. Prevention has to start within ourselves.

Violence means to act with severe intensity, excessive or extreme feeling or passion of words, anger or fury and is usually loud, disruptive, and dangerous and causes intense fear. Actions like bullying, abuse, control, all having a way of making an injury or intense, destructive or terrorizing effect on someone physically or emotionally are all the actions of violence. Violence destroys families, hurts feelings, erases confidence, ends careers, ruins friendships, kills respect and reputations, damages property and

can be life threatening to the body and soul. It is inside our very spirits we are damaged when we are violent or even when we are exposed to violence. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. "Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him." I've learned that by limiting exposure to violence, becoming good examples, learning to love rather than hate, remembering we can always "Walk away" and refusing to behave like animals, as youth and adults, we can prevent violence where it begins... inside ourselves.

Erika Cragun - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Highland Junior High School - Teacher, Christina Orefice

### The Secret

Living in fear

Shedding a little tear

Not knowing what you are worth

Thinking it's always at the worst

Your friends don't know

You have nothing to show

No one believes

So how will you ever achieve

Violence. Eight letters that spell out fear, sadness and control.

We all have heard how bad violence is, but we never think of how often we do it. Teasing your friends, joking around with offensive words. It's all part of the life we live. Though many people think that it is only one word, one fight, it's no big deal. But the next thing you know is that you are in fights daily tearing people down on the inside. You laugh at their tears, you make them fear you.

We watch movies and we read books. Though most just laugh and smile at them, but they all contain violence one way or the other. We use violence for our entertainment. Though after 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I didn't find it that entertaining after all.

All of the hate words coming at me. All of the thoughts that I would think of myself. "Would they be happier if I wasn't here?" "Do I belong here?" "Does anyone care about me?" Thinking back I don't know what got me through it.

7<sup>th</sup> grade tore me apart. But right when I thought things would get better, 8<sup>th</sup> grade came. I was scared to walk around the corner, not sure what would face me. I was scared to walk through the door of the classroom. I would try to keep myself strong, but I couldn't. By the time 4<sup>th</sup> period came around, I was in tears.

I didn't think that my problems were that bad compared to the bigger things that appeared on the news, so I didn't really tell anyone. No one knew that I was being bullied. No one knew that the girl they used to know was slowly leaving. She was falling apart piece by piece.

I then soon acted differently. I stopped eating as much. I lost weight. I thought that maybe if I got skinnier then maybe I would stop being bullied. Though getting skinnier was not possible. I was only 75 pounds. I got quieter. Stopped talking as much. I sat by myself. No one knew that I was dying inside.

I didn't know how so many people believed in me when I couldn't believe in myself. Why did all of these people hate me? What did I do to deserve it? What had I done wrong?

One day when I walked in my next class to put my stuff down to go to lunch, my teacher saw me crying. She wanted to know what was wrong. I had to tell her. Someone had to know what was going on.

When I let it all out, I felt a lot better. All of the thoughts of being worthless disappeared. All of my tears dried out. The pieces were coming together, but they would never fully fit together. There will always be the little crack that will show like a scar.

Now I am getting bullied less. I never let them win. But just because there is one success story doesn't mean that there are ones that end like mine. Violence is everywhere. We have wars, shooting, murders, suicides, fights, and many more. Though we may not know it violence is all about the control.

Even when people want to "teach the bully a lesson," it's fighting fire with fire. It just creates more violence. We have the choice of using violence. We don't have to fight back. We don't have to increase the violence. You'

You're never alone  
Someone is always there  
So sit up and say  
I care  
Are you there for me?  
Someone will say yes  
And they always will be

Don't let violence

Bring you down

Don't just sit there

We can be there

Stopping it too

There is something we all can do

To stop the thing that is tearing us apart

It's never too late to start

Brittany Critchfield - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Mount Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Nathan Elkins

Every school has a problem with bullying, and every kid has been a part of it in some way, I'm no exception. Bullying affects us more than some adults may think, causing problems with self-esteem even years after the initial incident. I remember watching one of my closest friends get bullied to the point of tears, while I stood by, not having the courage to do anything. I remember begging my parents to let me change schools after a rather horrible month I spent with no friends. I remember feeling helpless in both situations. However, the memory that has haunted me the most is the time it was *me* who was the bully.

It happened about a year ago when I was in seventh grade. It was my first year in middle school and I was really excited. Before that year I hadn't ever had very many close friends, but over the summer I had gone through a 'personality makeover' and I was a lot more outgoing. Plus, with all the new people it would have been hard not to like a few. I had friends that really liked me, they came to *me* for advice, and as conceited as it seems I could get them to do practically anything. I should have noticed it was a bad thing, but I was too busy with my newfound popularity to ever question it.

Then, a new girl, Mandy, showed up. My friends instantly fell in love with her, and all the attention they had previously been handing to me was suddenly given to her and I was very jealous. All they could talk about was Mandy, "Oh, I'm hanging out with Mandy!" or, "Mandy's outfit was *so* cute today!" Whenever I saw her, all I could think about was all the things that were wrong with her – how she had to have her two cents on everything, how she was always kissing up to the teachers. I was too focused on pointing out everything wrong with her that I

never took the time to think, "Hey, maybe her outfit was really cute today!" or "Maybe she *is* really fun to hang out with!" I judged her too quickly and too harshly.

Then, Mandy started sitting with us at lunch on a daily basis. My friends didn't even realize when I didn't talk at all, or even when I went and sat somewhere else. I guess Mandy realized how lonely I was though, because she invited me to a sleepover at her house the following week.

At the sleepover everyone but Mandy shut me out, ignoring me whenever I tried to talk. I told them I was going outside for a minute in a lousy attempt to buy some time away from them. On the way there I walked past Mandy's parents' bedroom and overheard them talking. I slowed down in an effort to hear them better. They were talking about money problems, how they couldn't afford their house payment. On one hand, I felt terribly sorry for them, but on the other, I knew this information could be helpful in getting my friends back.

I should have stopped right there. I should have realized I didn't need to hurt people to get what I wanted. After all, it wasn't Mandy who was being mean; it was my so-called 'friends'. However, my conscious had taken an unplanned trip, and the devil on my shoulder was very persuasive.

The next day at lunch, everyone was talking about going shopping at an expensive store. I come from a low income family, but I knew that if I just went with them and helped them pick something out, they were usually oblivious to the fact that I wasn't shopping for myself. Mandy was obviously uncomfortable. This was my opportunity and I knew it.

"But Mandy," I said in the most pleasant tone I could manage, "I hear you might not have enough money to come with us. Oh well, I guess you can just go wait at the soup kitchen down the street while we shop!" It wasn't that great of an insult, but all of my friends started laughing, while Mandy just stared down at her food. She didn't speak for the rest of lunch.

From then on, whenever any of us saw her we made a remark like that. It continued for a week, and then she finally stopped sitting with us. It was hilarious to us. She sat by herself, too scared that if she tried to make friends, we would ridicule her for it. That made it even funnier. I heard her bawling in the bathroom several times, but never did anything about it. We were having fun, and she kind of deserved it, didn't she?

A month later, Mandy's family moved to Oregon to live with a relative.

Later, I realized what I had done, but the damage had already been done and there was no way to apologize. Even if I could have, my ego was probably too big to ever go through with it.

I guess I should thank Mandy, because after that I realized what a disgusting person I had become. I distanced myself from my friends after that, no longer caring if I was idolized by them. I hoped that if I didn't get caught up in their drama, I might change for the better.

I switched schools later that year. It was always my big mouth that got me into trouble, so I started talking less. Now, I try to convince my friends not to bully others and remove myself from the situation when that doesn't work. I care less about what other people think of me.

I don't think adults realize how bad bullying has gotten, with things like Facebook and cell phones everywhere, it's impossible to avoid. I hope Mandy is in a better situation now and has made some better friends

Nathan Cummings - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High School - Teacher, Kim Irvine

## A Cry for Help

I hear the cries of children near, who are scared through the night  
Their cheeks are wet with tears, they don't know what has happened  
Their parents are gone, they are in a new house  
They are tired, but sleep doesn't take them  
There is a soft hand on the shoulder, and a hug from a stranger  
The crying stops, they are no longer scared  
They know they will be cared and loved, and that is enough to love the stranger

I hear the cries of the little kids in the back of the car on our way back to our house. They are scared; scared that they will not see their family again. They do not know that it is to protect them. They do not understand where they are going and why. They don't know they have been placed in Foster Care. My family signed up for foster care a couple of years ago. We thought that we would get one or two kids at a time, but instead we got a call for three little girls; ages one, two, and three.

They were in foster care for domestic violence. I think that if those little girls had stayed in their house and seen their parents fighting when they got older, they would follow their example. They might also channel all of their anger from their parents fighting that they might become bullies. I think this is one result of youth violence.

We have also had a little boy come to our house; he is nine years old. During every phone call he makes to his parents, he asks them to not fight each other anymore and to just love

each other. His parents always respond that they have taken classes to help them and they will get along now. I'm not sure if he believes them.

Children follow their parents. If their parents are part of a specific religion, then their children will most likely be a part of that religion. If parents fight, then their kids might do the same. I think this is a major cause of youth violence. If someone is being bullied, they might reel back and become the bully. If someone is having a hard time at home with their family, then they might take to violence.

“Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

My generation has one more tool for bullies than the ones before us... cyber-bullying. Bully victims used to just have to endure through school, and then they wouldn't have to worry when they got home, but now, victims have to endure every time they get on Facebook or their cell phones. This has caused more people to commit suicide. Fifteen to twenty-five kids commit suicide per year because of bullying. We need to stop that.

My life has changed because of youth violence. I don't have violence happen to me in my school or at home, but my foster siblings have. The little girls would always immediately resort to violence by hitting or pinching. Their parents have taught them to fight, and they might teach their kids to do the same. Those girls have taught me how much little kids look up to their parents. I now know how much my attitude and actions can have an effect on others.

“I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.”  
-Mohandas Gandhi

I want to stop bullying and youth violence by posting a website where people can go to it if they have bully problems and would like to talk about them. Victims could also get advice on their bully problems I would also post a motivational quote of the day that could help them through the day. I want bullying and youth violence to end today, and never have it come back.

Yassmin Peralta – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Midvale Middle School - Teacher, Jennifer Romney

Everyone has been picked on,  
At least once or twice.  
Whether you're a nerdy pawn,  
Or a social device.

I, like everyone else have experienced this.  
Being bullied just because of my different race.  
The days go on, always amiss,  
And everyday, I wish I had a paler face.

It's always everywhere, anywhere,  
Being judged because of my dark shade.  
Trying to escape their vicious glare,  
But now I'm always afraid....

I'll never be truly free from these tortures.  
They'll always be picking on me,  
like hungry, hateful vultures.  
So every time, I'll just have to flee.

It's true, I'll never be quite the same.  
But I have grown stronger,  
Now I know how to tame my pain.  
And I'm angry no longer.

Where does this violent malice come from?  
This desire to inflict injury, harm, or suffering to beings?  
Could it be a mental delirium?  
Or simply hurt feelings?

Regrettably, this can start anywhere your mind can roam.  
It could be your peers at school,  
Or abuse and neglect from a parent at home.  
Either way, in the end, it will always be cruel.

But no matter when it begins or ends  
there's a way to cope.  
Even though you didn't make amends  
Just remember, there's such a thing as hope.

And together we can change this.  
We could stand up for what's right,  
and fix everything that's amiss,  
Making the cause against violence shine golden bright.

It starts with you and I.  
Reflecting on our actions,  
and to the bad ones, say bye,  
To make a world with less social factions.

But most importantly, we can stand up for others,  
and be a good friend.  
No more physical or emotional smothers,  
and others defend.

By doing little things, we can make a difference.  
The plan is already unfurled.  
We just have to go the distance,  
and together we will change the world.

David Quach - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda Lujan

### **You Can Make a Difference**

Youth violence has affected my life by getting hurt, me hurting other people, losing friends, and not feeling safe. One time when I was in 5th grade and there was this new kid and I tried to make friends with him. When I tried he just ignored me, so I ignored him. People would make fun of how he was African and because he was new and didn't know how things worked in America. So in an instinct to him to pick on everybody else, he would hit them and would call them rude things. So then on day the kids were picking on them and the new kid told to shut up. I came there to defend him but then it turned into a fight. I was bleeding because he clawed me and I made the other kid cry. The next day I felt so bad because it was his first week in the school and he was already crying. That made me so good when I fought him but now looking back at it all it caused was sorrow and lots trouble.

It can be more than just physical most of the time it is verbal. Verbal bullying is more common and can scar you for life. Physical pain is just for a short period of time while verbal bullying can last a lifetime. The most common thing that causes suicide is verbal abuse and neglecting somebody. Anything that involves harming someone is considered violence. So next time think before you say something or hurt somebody because you could cause them to get severely scared or even die.

I've lost many friends to youth violence, some of my friends getting bullied so severely that they might even transfer schools. Some friends make stupid choices and join gangs. I tell them to stop because if you do that you get nowhere in life and probably wound up getting hurt. Now I'm not their friend anymore because I don't want to be around that. Some violence in my

life was so severe that it involved a gun. Now my friend doesn't go to school, he doesn't live in a house, he's not even on earth anymore, and he is gone forever

Youth violence causes lots of things like more rules. No violence is a rule in school and when you break it there has to be more rules because the school wants to keep you safe. If there are more rules than there is definitely less freedom of what you do. We were able to wear hat before but now we can't because of gang violence.

One thing that causes youth violence is the media. It causes it because now there is violence in everything. Every television show has violence and many kids watch TV. Celebrities are always making bad choices and are getting into violent situations. Video games have so much violence in them. These things influence kids to get in violent situations.

Your family is another thing that causes youth violence. You look up to your family and act like them because you are with them every day. If one member of the family is violent usually the other members are. Your family is a part of a gang you usually want to be a part of it too. If you get treated cruelly at home you will treat other people cruelly which will eventually lead into a fight. Other people cause it, people around you including your friends and neighbors.

Drugs and alcohol are also main factors that cause youth violence. Drugs and alcohol are very addicting which will cause lots of fight over alcohol and drugs or stealing money to buy these substances. Drugs are very addictive and causes lots of harm to your brain and you won't

know what you are doing which will cause violence. In alcohol you will eventually drink too much and get drunk, you will also not know what you are doing and it may cause violence.

You can stop youth violence by just saying no to it when it comes at you. If someone tells you if you want to fight say no, if someone asks you if you want to jump someone always say the word no. When someone u that has to do anything with violence then just back away from it. You have to always stay in school and a positive example for everyone. If you're not an example and stay away from violence then other people will think it is ok to harm other people because you know what they say monkey see monkey do. Go into program if you are in lots of violence and you want to get out. Adrenaline and anger is a thing you must control and not let it get the better of you because if you do it could cause some really scary situations. This last thing is a big one, friends. The can really be a good example and make your life easier or the can be a bad example and really screw you over.

I can do many things about youth violence. First I must target it at it source schools. When you see a fight you have 3 choices, to go in it and stop it which is a bad idea because you will probably get hurt, you could tell a teacher which would be the best decision, or you can stand there do nothing and watch, which is what most people do. If you are the one getting into the fight you should just walk away and forget it. If someone is intimidating you or threatening you in anyway tell a teacher before you get into it because you could get hurt or get into trouble. If you tell a teacher it is very likely that the problem will stop, never tolerate bullying. Youth violence is everywhere and can happen to anyone, you need to be the one to prevent it.

Shelby Reynolds – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Desert Hills Middle School - Teacher, Elise Shepherd

## **Bullied Too Far**

**Verbal abuse, cyber bully, physical and emotional abuse. All of the things that make teens depressed, scared, and afraid of being different. People bully others all the time and they always say, "Just kidding!" Behind every just kidding there is a little honesty and a little truth. Bullies don't realize what they are doing to people. Bullying is everywhere we look, but most of the time we are too blind to notice it. If we just looked up and stood up for people this world would be a much better place.**

***"No, you don't know what it's like  
When nothing feels all right  
You don't know what it's like  
To be like me  
To be hurt  
To feel lost  
To be left out in the dark  
To be kicked when you're down  
To feel like you've been pushed around  
To be on the edge of breaking down  
And no one's there to save you  
No, you don't know what it's like  
Welcome to my life"  
— Simple Plan***

**Bullying has affected my life in many ways. I have this friend; he is a really great kid. He told me that before he moved here he was beat up by kids almost everywhere he lived. He lived in the ghetto and everyone in his neighborhood beat him up and always picked on him. He is now living in a safe neighborhood and has lots of friends. I asked him how he went through all of that and turned out to be a really smart and funny kid. His response... was hope. This type of bullying doesn't just affect a person while it lasts; it affects them the rest of their life. They're afraid of being different; afraid of being someone they want to be instead of someone they have to be. This type of bullying needs to stop.**

***"Some people won't be happy until they've pushed you to the ground. What you have to do is have the courage to stand your ground and not give them the time of day. Hold on to your power and never give it away."  
— Donna Schoenrock***

**To me the main causes of bullying are probably anger, jealousy, and the need to be better than everyone else. Slitting your wrists and even worse... committing suicide is bullying your self. I've experienced that first hand. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 one of my really good friends died from being bullied over and over again. He always carved things into his skin. He was trying to get an adrenalin rush by standing on a bench and tying a rope around his neck, the adrenalin gets you high. While he was standing on the bench it fell over and he accidentally hung himself. Rumors were spreading and everyone thought that he did kill himself because he had been bullied. The only reason people found out that he was getting bullied was because of journal writings that were read at the funeral. Statistics shows that the third leading cause of death among teens is suicide. Over the past year, one in eleven high school students admit to having made a suicide attempt. One in eleven, that's ridiculous. One-sixth of the time if someone commits suicide, someone else commits suicide due to depression. That could start a chain reaction until a whole clique of students is gone out of a school.**

***"Could a scar be like the rings of a tree, reopened with each emotional season?"***  
**— Magenta Periwinkle**

**One way to help prevent bullying is to be kind to everyone. You could just make their life even worse than it already is. You never know what they are going through and you don't know what kind of situation they are in. There is this song by Macklemore; it's called "Wings". It talks about him getting Air Jordan's, popular but expensive basketball shoes. It also talks about his friends' brother getting murdered for his Air Jordan's. There are many reports about people getting murdered and beat up for their sports apparel. Reports often say that the victims best friend murder them just for their sneakers. Many victims had been choked to death, and shot in the hall ways of high schools, all by the greediness of friends. This isn't just bullying, this is flat out murder. I honestly don't know how you could go through with killing your best friend over a pair of shoes. I find this extremely selfish and appalling. There is always going to be a breaking point in the one being bullied. Let's hope and pray that it never goes so far that they can't stand to even live any more.**

***"Life is a fight, but not everyone's a fighter. Otherwise, bullies would be an endangered species."***  
**— Andrew Vachss**

**To conclude I would like to share another experience. I was at the bus stop one cold morning. My best friend showed up and he looked at me in a weird way. The night before I had curled my hair a new way and my sister said it didn't look bad so I went to school with my hair like that. He said I looked like a poodle and a freak. As we got on the bus I texted my mom to come and get me before the bell rang to go to first period. I didn't want anyone else to make fun of me the way my best friend did. This kind of bullying hurts, especially when you are a girl, because looking good is very important, and especially when it is your best friend being the bully. A lot of the time the bully doesn't even know that they are bullying. It could be a weird look or calling someone a name, or even ignoring someone so they think they are invisible. Bullying affects everyone, whether you are the bully or the one being bullied. Bullying hurts, but it doesn't have to. Bullying is a legal crime, committed not only by peers but by friends too. If we take a stand against bullying we can conquer and destroy the effects of it.**

***Courage is fire, and bullying is smoke.***

***—Benjamin Disraeli***

**Ben Sherer-Lykes - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
Treasure Mountain Junior High School - Teacher, Julie Hooker

**I'm Different and I Know It**

5th grade is when it all started  
And I really wasn't prepared  
I liked a girl  
Until she started making fun of me

She was so mean  
I couldn't let her know  
How much her words hurt me so

I have Tourette's Syndrome  
It makes my face tic  
I make throat sounds  
And my eyes blink

I'm different and I know it  
I try not to show it  
I don't need you to make fun of me

I'm impulsive and energetic  
I've been labeled ADD  
I struggle with school work  
But I still get A's and B's

I've been called stupid, fag, and retard  
The words cut so deep  
I can't show how much it hurts at school  
Cause everyone will think I'm a freak

I'm different and I know it  
I try not to show it  
I don't need you to make fun of me

My teammates have left me out  
They have told me that I suck  
I rise above it by being the opposite of them

My coaches know I'm different and good at what I do  
They push me hard to reach a higher level  
It's awesome when I medal

I'm different and I know it  
I try not to show it

I don't need you to make fun of me

Last summer I received a call from a so called friend  
But the message he left me  
Threaten me to my end

Another so called friend invited me to hang  
When I got to the park  
It was not all fun and games

They got up in my face  
They started screaming and yelling  
They didn't want to listen to what I had to say  
So i ran away

They followed me home  
But the yelling wouldn't stop  
They stalked my house  
Until they were told to leave

I finally found the courage to go outside  
To speak my mind  
But I ended up being surrounded  
By a group of peers being led blind

I'm different and I know it  
I try not to show it  
I don't need you to make fun of me

Bullying is mean and cruel  
You should watch what you say  
You may think its funny  
But it hurts anyway

People really don't like it  
When you call them names  
Or push or shove them  
Or make them feel lame

Why do we insist on picking on each other  
When being a teenager is hard enough  
We are all going through the same stuff  
Shouldn't we be supportive and not so rough?

Find your voice  
Let it be heard

Stop the bullies from spreading their words  
Tell a teacher, grab a friend, make sure you put it to an end

There is danger in what they do  
They may push a kid too far  
And then its too late  
You can't take the words back  
So let go of the hate

You're different and you know it  
You really should show it  
I promise I won't make fun of you

*Utah Board of Juvenile Justice*

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