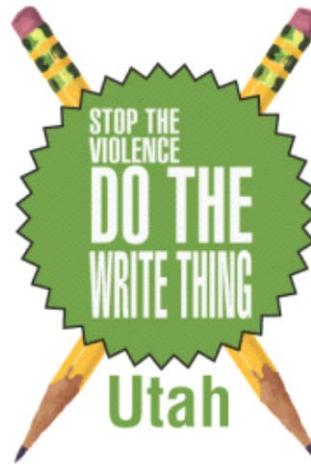


UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO  
**Do the Write Thing**



*Student Writings*  
**2015**

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice



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**Do the Write Thing 2015 VIP Judges**

**Chief Chris Burbank**  
*Salt Lake City Police Department*

**Joseph Decker**  
*Beesley Foundation*

**Katherine Decker**  
*Beesley Foundation*

**Reg Garff, Director**  
*Office of Rural Programs,  
Division of Juvenile Justice Services*

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

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

**Judge Renee Jimenez**  
*Third District Juvenile Court*

**Mayor Ben McAdams**  
*Salt Lake County*

**Karlie Major**  
*Miss Teen Utah 2015*

**McCall Morris**  
*2014 National Finalist*

**Jason Nguyen, Reporter**  
*ABC4 News*

**Derek Parra**  
*Olympic Medalist*

**Cora Rasmuson**  
*2014 National Finalist*

**Kathy Younker**  
*Wheeler Foundation*

**Do the Write Thing  
Organizing Committee**

Spencer Larsen  
Nindy Le, Co-Chair  
Van Nguyen  
Rachael Skidmore, Co-chair

UTAH'S FIFTEENTH 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 in Utah and around the country to make a personal, written commitment to combat youth violence in their communities. The program works because it targets youth violence in the communities where violence 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 (UBJJ) and managed by the UBJJ Youth Subcommittee. The Board monitors Utah's compliance with the core protections afforded in 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, with quality, evidence based programs. 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 and teachers encouraging them to involve their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Challenge. Suggestions about how to tie the Challenge into course work are available online for teachers at <http://www.juvenile.utah.gov/writething.html>. Students can 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 are 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 2,000 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence. Nearly 700 chose to submit essays for review. Students from the University of Utah, Weber State University, and Salt Lake Community College participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top ninety writings. The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice then selected the top thirteen 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. Finally, 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!

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice and the Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee thank the following for their generous support:

Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley  
Foundation  
Wheeler Foundation  
Kuwait-America Foundation  
National Campaign to Stop Violence  
Southwest Airlines

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

# *National Finalists*

*Owen Jeffs*

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Draper Park Middle School  
Teacher, Kimberly Carter*

*Che'lyn Nagel*

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade, West Jordan Middle School  
Teacher, Stacey Sawyer*

Owen Jeffs - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Kimberly Carter

You can Make a Difference

Violence is any act that might hurt someone physically or emotionally. Violence feels like constant beating down without any hope of it stopping. Violence sounds unique for each person, it might sound like shouting and screaming or it might sound silent for others. Violence looks like cuts and bruises or loneliness. No matter what kind of violence, if its bullying, suicide or your parents arguing it affects everybody. “Be yourself, because the people who mind don’t matter, and the people that matter don’t mind”- Dr. Seuss

Violence has been a part of my life through my step-brother. One day I was at a skate park with my brother and his friends. I saw him walk out and head towards a creek with his friends. I followed him and when he saw me coming he became very skittish. They were all going under a bridge by the creek and my brother didn’t want me there. He told me to leave so I started walking home. I was almost home when my mom and step-dad pulled up in the car and asked where my brother was. I told them and we drove over to the bridge where they were. My step-dad got out of the car and went down under the bridge. My brother was about to do illegal drugs. From that point on a spiral of events went from bad to worse. My brother started to get into fights with his parents. He started to do more illegal activities. He would get in fights at his school. Finally his mom turned him in. He was in juvenile detention for about a month. The he was on probation with weekly drug tests. Since he wasn’t able to do drugs or drink alcohol because it would show up on the drug test, so he would drink cold medicine.

I had just gotten out of school and my mom came to pick me up. When I got in the car and we drove away, she told me that my brother had tried to commit suicide. I was in shock. I asked how and if he is okay. He drank five bottles of cold medicine and when his mom found him he

was almost dead. I was really scared for him. My step-dad cried that night and I had never seen him cry before.

I think violence in young people is caused by bottled up anger. This anger can come from stress, family issues and bullying. There can be so many things on a young person's mind and they just don't have an outlet other than violence. If a child is being abused any way at home they might be violent because that is what their parents have taught them. A young person with a lot of stress feels like they are in a big hole that they will never get out of, hurting another person gives them relief. Bullying is different though. There can be violence from both sides of the bullying. The victim of the bullying will eventually snap and will be violent. The bully is obviously hurting somebody but they themselves are probably unstable in another part of their life. The bully puts somebody down to make them feel dominant.

Many things can be done to prevent youth violence. If a young person is acting out violently, there is probably little communication between them and a safe adult. The young person needs to know the consequences of violence. I can help prevent youth violence by being kinder and have more empathy for others. I can also stand up for others if they are in a bad situation. My school can help by starting an anti-violence club. The city I live in can help by bringing awareness to the citizens. Our country can help by sending people to schools to teach about youth violence. There are even more ways people can help.

Violence is any act that can hurt somebody physically or emotionally. Violence affects us as people by making you feel like less of a person. Violence affects everybody even if they didn't experience it. The world would be a heck of a lot easier if the violence was reduced or even eliminated. I can stop violence by having more empathy. Everybody can make a difference.

Che'lyn Nagel - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
West Jordan Middle School – Teacher, Stacey Sawyer

Your Stronger Than This:

When you close your eyes and plug your ears but you can still hear “this would be a better place without you”, “ why are you here?” and, “no one wants you here”. When you can still see the hateful looks they send your way. It hurts.. people are rude, spiteful and jealous. Don't listen to them, they are wrong!! When they look at you and see your strength and the beauty you hold inside your soul, they get jealous and will do anything they can to take that away from you. When you feel the tears coming down your face and the voices in your head saying, “they're right” think again, because they are SO wrong! You are beautiful inside and out, no matter what anyone says. Everyone is different, and those quality's you have but no one else has are what make you beautiful. Your personality is sparkling, and all they want to do is take that away from you, don't let them! No matter what you think or see about yourself, there's always something more. There will always be something they don't know about you, you have your secrets and insecurities and its sad that others are just so careless and don't consider how they're words make others feel. Don't let anyone's ignorance, hate, drama, and negativity stop you from becoming the best person you can be.

I know this is so hard to deal with, I know from personal experience. In the 4<sup>th</sup> grade there was a new girl her name was Shaylee, we became really good friends, but little did I know that when she teased me it would turn into bullying. To me at the time when she would tell me I was fat and ugly it was just a joke, but then her words started to get to me, I told her to stop because the words she was calling me hurt, but she didn't understand she told me I was being a baby and I needed to grow up. So I stopped being her friend, she left me alone for a while, but then she really started bullying me. She would trip me and slam me into walls. When I was not at school she would be texting me calling me nasty words and being rude, I blocked her number but she would find other numbers to text me on.

This experience caused me to become very depressed for about 3 years, to the point that I would self-harm and I was having suicidal thoughts. Let me tell you, it's not worth it, destroying your perfect body and cutting up your wrist. I know it's hard the pain you feel you just want it to go away, and you will do anything to make it stop, but stop destroying yourself. If you take your life now, you will never be able to prove to the people that made you feel this way that they were wrong that you are strong, beautiful and that their words cannot bring you down. There is a point in living if there wasn't why would you be here in the first place? Suicide and self-harming is not the way to go, I promise. Let the positive rule over the negative, open your ears to the positive and close them to the negative. We all tend to listen to the negative more than the positive. You have the people telling you, "you can never be good enough." but you are good enough that's why they are doing this to you.

Bullying hurts but there are ways to stop it. We need to work together and do everything we can to stop it! In some states such as California, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, and many other states in the US it is illegal to cyberbully but they have not made it illegal in Utah, we can change that, all we have to do is start a petition, a petition is, a formally drawn request, often bearing the names of a number of those making the request, that is addressed to a person or group of persons in authority or power, soliciting some favor, right, mercy, or other benefit. We can start one in our state, to make cyber bullying illegal, just think of how many lives that would save!! All states but Montana have made it illegal to bully in person. So let's work together to stop bullying either on line or In person. Bullying is a problem, a problem we need to stop! Bullies normally, bully out of hate they feel towards their selves, they want others to feel the pain they feel inside. So be a good friend even if they bully you and hurt you that doesn't mean you have to do the same to them.

When you are being bullied there are many solutions, there is a free bully hot line, and your parents or any trustable adult are always opened to help you, it may seem like there is no escape like

there is no way out of the mean and harsh words that came out of their mouths towards you or when they swing to take a hit at you, stop them stand up for yourself and I'm not saying to hit them back or say what they have said to you, that will make things worse. But say "stop" let them know why you don't deserve how they are making you feel, and if that doesn't stop them, tell an adult and that will help. And if you witness bullying stand up for the victim, think about what YOU can do by standing up to one person one bullying, it will make a difference; it could literally save a life. And did you know if you are a witness to bullying and you record it or don't do anything about it you can get in almost as much trouble as the bully, because it's considered supporting bullying.

No one deserves to feel like no one cares or like they aren't loved. Because someone cares and someone loves you. Don't listen to the hate they feel towards you for whatever reason, just don't listen to them, and yeah it's really hard. But if you have to block them on social media do everything to avoid the negativity and bullying.

One quote I really like, is "ultimately don't let yourself believe that you're in the without a life jacket" to me this means well, a life jacket can save your life if you don't know how to swim, so this quote is saying to remember that even if you don't know how to get through this challenge there's always going to be something or someone to save your life and to help you get through this.

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

*Runners Up*

*Hannah Freeman*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Kristy Searle**

*Tyler Murrill*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Draper Park Middle School  
Teacher, Whitney Lee**

Hannah Freeman - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Kristy Searle

## Courage

Ever since I can remember, we as kids have been told that we can make a difference. The anti-bullying presentations we see at school make it seem like a piece of cake to change our communities. But is it really as easy as it looks? Macklemore once said, "Bullying is a national epidemic," and I couldn't agree more. It has spread to all corners of the world faster than wildfire, and it seems like there is no cure to be found. How will we find the cure? How can we prevent youth violence?

The Do the Write Thing Challenge has made me think about that a lot. I've grown up in a good home with good friends, and I can't remember a time that I have been intentionally bullied. Even though I haven't been bullied personally, I have seen the huge impact that youth violence has on my family, friends, and peers.

I first witnessed bullying when I was six years old. At my elementary school there was a little boy who would be classified as a bully. He was a really mean kid who struggled in his schoolwork, and almost everyone was scared of him. He was notorious. Whenever you saw him approaching, you'd fearfully hurry away so that you wouldn't become his next victim. Me and the little boy advanced through grades together for many years, and every year he became even more frightening. Finally, he threatened a kid and threw him to the ground one day at recess and I never saw him at my school again.

But how come he was so mean? What caused him to bully others? When I had to sit next to him in class during second grade, I learned why. I started to see a whole other side of him that few people in my class ever saw. I learned that he came from a broken home. The boy lived with his grandmother, and his parents didn't treat him well. I believe that his home life caused a lot of pain, and bullying became an outlet for him to express his anger and despair.

Even though he frightened me, I made an effort to try and befriend him. I felt sad for him, and I wanted to help. I remember one time I invited him to play with me at recess. I really enjoyed spending time with him that day, but my friends all thought I was

crazy. My classmates would say to me, "How come you were playing with him? He's mean!" I ignored them and continued playing with him, but then after a week or so it got to me, and I stopped playing with the boy. He went back to sitting by himself at the edge of the playground and wandering around alone. I never reached out to him again.

Looking back, I am deeply ashamed that I stopped being his friend, even though I had only been so for a short time. I gave into peer pressure and believed what everyone said about the boy, even though I knew that he wasn't what he appeared to be. I lacked courage to stand up for what I knew was right. He was a sweet boy, and all he needed was a friend. Maybe if I had been his friend throughout our elementary school days, he would've stopped being a bully. Maybe he would've become the star student, the kid that everyone adored. By helping him, I could've also protected the kids he bullied in our later elementary days.

Dr. Steve Maraboli said, "With one kind gesture, you can change a life. One person at a time you can change the world. One day at a time we can change everything." That quote really speaks to me, and I found it really fitting for the message I want to convey right now. Preventing youth violence starts with us, and we can stop it by reaching out to the bullies and those in need. If we can "nip it in the bud" and reach out a hand to a bully, we can also help prevent them from hurting innocent people. The effect we have on one person can change our lives and communities for the better.

I'd like to give an example of courage to make a difference from Disney Pixar's *A Bug's Life*. The main antagonist and leader of the evil grasshoppers, Hopper, explained to his comrades that "You let one ant stand up to us, then they all might stand up! Those puny little ants outnumber us a hundred to one, and if they ever figure that out there goes our way of life!" Hopper feared that if one ant had the courage to stand up, then all of them would rise and overthrow the grasshoppers. In the end of *A Bug's Life*, the ants realized that if they put their mind to it, they could accomplish anything, even if it seems impossible. They banded together and got rid of the grasshoppers forever.

The movie perfectly describes our situation in the present day; we are the ants, and the bullies are the grasshoppers. Just like the colony of ants, we need to come

together for the greater good. If we can realize how strong we are, we can do anything, including preventing youth violence.

You have the power within you to do anything you want, large or small. It all depends on you how you will use it. Will you use your power to be a bystander, or will you use it to stand up and do what's right? As said in the movie *We Bought a Zoo*, "all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage." With twenty seconds of insane courage you could stand up to that mean girl or reach out a hand to that bully who doesn't have any friends. It takes an awful lot of courage, and you might not have an army fighting alongside you, but you can do it. You'll be grateful that you did.

Tyler Murrill - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Whitney Lee

## Violence... the Worst disease

Violence. The worst part of human nature. It is what drives us to do terrible things. Violence is like a tree. It is constantly growing. The trunk has lots of branches extruding from it. Some are thin, like rudeness or verbal bullying. Some are huge, like killing. Violence is harmful, with varying levels. It can be a quick flash, said in the heat of the moment, which hurts one second, forgotten the next. It could also be a constant throb such as bullying that will stay with you for a long time. "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent."- Mahatma Ghandi.

Violence has affected everyone. Even if they don't know it, violence has affected lots of people. Whether they have been the antagonist, the victim, or a bystander doesn't matter. They have all been affected by violence. You have been affected by violence. Your friend has. Your neighbor has. Everyone has been affected by this creeping disease. Most people experience violence indirectly. But, sadly, lots have experienced it directly. I am of the latter group. When I lived in Arizona I was beat up multiple times. I have had the front of my torso black, blue, yellow, red, and varying shades of purple. I hid it from everyone. My friends, my family, and everyone else. This is the first time I have ever talked about it. The bullying made me feel embarrassed, ashamed, and unwanted. It angered me that I couldn't do anything. I learned that holding it in makes it worse. Believe me, I know all too well the shame and embarrassment from talking about your problems. It might seem bad, but it will be worse in the long run to hold it in.

I wish there was one cause of violence that we could destroy. There are just too many causes to stamp it out. One cause is jealousy. But, personally, I believe the true cause is human nature. As humans we feel the need to be better than someone or something. This isn't an excuse. There isn't a single excuse for violence. Despite the fact that violence is in our nature, we can suppress it. Most people do. Another large cause of violence in my eyes is video games. The bad side of human nature and violent media go hand in hand. When you have someone who is naturally inclined toward violence and you have them play violent games it may make them even more violent than before.

The giant cannot be slayed by one person. We must work together to get rid of violence. To start killing off violence we should start by educating people. Not just generally, but education about violence. The more we know, the less we will see of violence. I will start fighting by learning more and being more than a bystander. I know it could come to an end.

Violence will only disappear if we worked together. Not just me, not just you, but every single one of us.

Violence is terrible, to say the least. It is a horrible thing. It affects you personally, such as giving you nightmares or causing physical pain. Violence can affect your whole family. It could also affect your entire community. The world would be so much better without violence of any kind. I can start fighting violence by teaching about it and learning about it. It will end eventually.

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

# *State Finalists*

*Arturo Agüero*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Draper Park Middle School  
Teacher, Whitney Lee

*Zachary Blank*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Kristy Searle

*Gage Brouse*

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

*Erika De La Riva Diaz*

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

*Salote Kinikini*

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

*Madilyn Munteer*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Kristy Searle

*Christian Riser*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Draper Park Middle School  
Teacher, Whitney Lee

*Patricia Salgado*

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

*Madalyn White*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Mike Farnsworth

Arturo Aguero - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Whitney Lee

## Why the Violence?

What is violence? Violence is an ever continuing acts of atrocious events of intentional pain and sometimes sadly, death. It may look like a battlefield of soldiers with guns trying to survive or as simple as a punch to the face. It may sound like a gunshot or as easy as a few intimidating words. Violence feels like a game of "predator and prey." Violence has a feeling of pain, sorrow, chaos, hatred, evilness, desperation, and darkness. At this rate, violence will consume nations, society, the world, and ultimately, the youth of the world...

Every day, violence is affecting youth all over the United States of America, in fact, the world. To some of these youth, violence has been a big part of their life for so long, to some of them, it is normal but it is a very uneasy thought to think of. Violence can affect anyone directly or indirectly. Whether you don't even know the person or you are the victim, you will still be affected. Thankfully, I am one the many who have been affected indirectly.

On September 1, 2013 in Draper, Utah, shortly before 6 am, multiple gunshots were fired at Officer Derek Johnson. Officer Derek Johnson then later passed away that same day. I was shocked to hear this. I realized that while I was sleeping, there was a crazy gunman on the loose in the city that I lived in, and the shooting was only a few miles from my home. Never in a million years I ever thought that such a peaceful, rich, and small city like Draper would ever have a shooting and especially, that a police officer would be killed. After being told, I was so nervous to go outside. "I am not going outside and give a chance to a mad gunman to be his next victim," I told my mother. Every single time I walked by a window in my home, I ducked my head. I was that terrified. Many families just like mine, were advised to stay inside. I felt like I was being quarantined. I didn't like it. As I sat in my room thinking about what just happened and all the similar and worse chaos's in the world, I could sense that there was a cloud of darkness, and cowardliness that surrounded me. I did not like this feeling. I did not like feeling afraid and feeling so "small." In fact, I was praying for this chaos to end. A couple hours later of sitting in my room, I was told that those who were responsible for Officer Johnson's death were in a hospital. I was so glad to hear that news. 300 pounds on my back finally disappeared in just one sigh of relief.

Ever since that event, it has affected my life. It has changed how I view wars, poverty, society, foreign countries, and most of all, the country I live in. I have come to

realize from that event, that violence affects youth very badly in the U.S. Statistics show that youth from the age of 12 to 24 are more likely to be a victim of a violent crime in the U.S. Another statistic shows that homicide is a leading cause of death in the youth of ethnic groups in the United States. To me these statistics are very terrible and I wish these statistics weren't true. But we all need to learn the causes of youth violence before we can prevent youth violence.

On April 20, 1999, 13 people were killed at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. They were killed by 17 year old Dylan Klebold and 18 year old Eric Harris. Ana Calvo, a care coordinator at Shriners Hospital in Houston, Texas said, "Many video games are like the ones used in training soldiers for war to desensitize them for combat." "The shooters at the Columbine High school in Littleton, Colorado, used them." Ana Calvo also said, "According to some studies and theories these children, Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, the Columbine shooters were under deep depression, neglected by parents, and victims of peer pressure." Elliot Aronson, a social psychologist, wrote in his book "Nobody Left to Hate" that the Columbine shootings, "were the results of humiliation, exclusion, and bullying." From this example of the Columbine shooting, we can see that media, depression, poor parenting, peer pressure, and bullying are factors of youth violence. An example of how depression can cause violence in youth is 15 year old boy Rasheen, who was charged for armed robbery. He couldn't remember much about his family. His mother abandoned him for drugs. He had to grow up with his grandmother and while growing up, he was hiding his shame against feelings for his abandonment and released all his anger outside his home. Abuse from parents can also cause youth violence. Terrell, a 15 year old boy, is an example of this. Terrell killed a store clerk when the clerk replied to his demand for cash that he couldn't give him any cash. This was influenced by his abusive father's lessons he learned at home.

Youth violence can be prevented and the country of Norway is a great example of this. When three Norwegian school children were being bullied and one attempted suicide, Norway's government surveyed all of it's 90,000 school children. Their findings prompted them to create campaigns in every school in Norway, organize community meetings, and create brochures to make parents aware of the victimization. Also, teachers stopped name-calling and during classes, discussed how to prevent bullying and to befriend socially isolated children in these Norwegian schools. These campaigns helped bring down bullying 50 percent in Norway. This is quite an accomplishment for Norway if you were to ask me. After seeing this example, I know if the United States of America's government were to create campaigns against youth violence just like the Norwegian government accomplished, the percentage of youth violence would go down.

I know also if the government were to create brochures about youth violence just like the government of Norway did, and give them to the parents of youth, this violence that is happening on a national scale, would slowly disappear. I also know if my school were to talk about youth violence and how to prevent youth violence just like the schools in Norway did, youth violence could be prevented even more. I know also that if my city were to create meetings about this issue, people could be better educated. How I can help reduce youth violence is by, helping those who are dealing with youth violence if I know anyone who is.

Violence is always affecting how we view many things, especially about our safety. I do not know if violence will ever be eliminated but I do know that everyone in this world can help reduce violence. If violence were to be reduced, I know that many wars could be prevented, poverty would be reduced, and the governments and economies of countries would be more stable. Schools would be a safer and a more comfortable environment for youth, more communities would be safer places for youth to live in, families would be happier, and most of all, the youth of the world would all be living happier lives. This could be accomplished if governments made their citizens more aware of this crucial and terrible thing. Communities could do their part if they were to better organize violence. Schools could educate their students about this topic to prevent violence. I know how I can help, that is by helping those who need help who are being involved with violence. But do you know how you can help?

Zachary Blank - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Kristy Searle

I have never once been seriously bullied. Elementary school was very easy, and simple for me. I didn't ever think about bullying, until I switched schools in 6th grade. I realized that I wasn't the most popular kid in the school. This irritated me for a while, and I caught myself always trying to work my way up the popularity scale. I was blinded by the "truth" that you always needed to be the most popular, or the funniest, or the coolest. But then, at about the beginning of 7th grade, my eyes were opened. I realized the people that weren't as popular as me and my friends. I realized the ones that sat alone at lunch. I realized the ones that stood alone in times of trial. And most importantly, I realized all of the people that I treated poorly in elementary school. I remembered how much I would pick on them, and tease them, and just bully them. This made me feel very bad. I felt like a complete jerk. I didn't make any serious resolutions though. Sure, I was treating people kinder, but not in a noticeable way. I didn't ponder on it, until one day I was on social media, and there was a page against bullying. I was interested so I went in and scanned the page. There were four or five videos that really made me snap. A disabled teenager was being taunted by kids bigger and stronger than him. They finally started hitting him, and they wouldn't stop. He was crying for help but the tonts got louder, and the kids hit harder. After the short videos, I was heartbroken. Luckily, this young man was made famous, and is treated with kindness from other kids now, because his story became famous. After watching these videos, the thought struck me immediately: There are thousands of kids just like this guy, who don't have their bullying story made known to thousands. They are bullied, just like the young man I have been talking about, but no one knows about it. They are silent to the world out of fear from the bullies. Afraid of what will come out of telling others. Some are not even able to tell others, just like the young man I was talking about. This thought grieved me. I got on my knees and asked what I could do to stop these violent crimes from occurring. I knew I had once been on the other side of the topic-when I was the bully, but no one stopped me. This is what stays in my head when I see someone being picked on. *They are not going to stop unless someone tells them to.* This could be the solution to so many occurrences! Speak up, because if no one does, the bully has no reason to stop. They need to be told that what they are doing is wrong, and it is affecting the person they are bullying in a negative way! Think about it. If someone was being bullied in your school, and everyone that saw it happening spoke up to the bully, don't you think that he/she would get the idea that what they are doing is wrong? "Knowing what's right doesn't mean much unless you do what's right."- Theodore Roosevelt. As I stated earlier, some people just cannot protect themselves. They can't. We as citizens have a DUTY to protect those who can't protect themselves. "Life is a fight, but not everyone's a fighter. Otherwise, bullies would be an endangered species."— Andrew Vachss. Although standing up for someone is almost a necessity, we also have to have compassion towards the bully. Usually the bully has had a very difficult life, or has had struggles that no one knows about, so they take out their emotions of anger or sorrow on people that aren't as strong, or as big as

them. "All I ever wanted was to reach out and touch another human being not just with my hands but with my heart."— Tahereh Mafi, *Shatter Me*. We need to stand up to bullies, and do the right thing, but at the same time have compassion towards them because we don't know what they have been through. I believe that if we emphasis the importance of just plain standing up to bullies, than we could make a difference. Just doing a little thing like asking a bully to stop, could make a giant difference on the victim, and the bullies life. The key, to stopping bullying, is having courage to stand up for what is right, and touching both the victim, and the bully, with your heart."Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."— Leo Buscaglia. I really want to make a change. I think about the subject a lot. even thinking about bullying makes me sick to my stomach. I would really love to spread the word to kids, teenagers, and even adults: Bullying NEEDS.TO.STOP.

-thank you

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

Violence in youth has affected my life greatly. The definition of youth violence is "harmful behaviors that can start early and continue into young adulthood." If we don't cut off this problem at the root right now, it will stem into an ugly, thorny, disgusting vine of profanity and bullying. When I was in 2nd grade, a kid much bigger than me would strut up to me and pop me in the head. I'll bet it looked like the whole David and Goliath situation, except David forgot his slingshot at his house. The name for what he did to me every day was the "daily smack". I would pace among the playground, looking for the oppressor who thought it was all in fun. I would try to avoid him all recess. Because of what he did to me, I became very jumpy and untrusting. To this day, I still have these symptoms. The mistake I made in this whole endeavor of cat and mouse was that I never went and told somebody I trusted. This made a few months of my second grade year miserable. However, one cold October day, I decided to stand up to him and told him to stop. This was one of the best decisions I have made. He stood down and said he was sorry. He didn't even realize that it caused me pain and thought it was just a fun thing to do. He even apologized to me, saying he would never do it again. This whole situation could have been avoided if the bystanders had told him to stop before it got out of hand. We not only need to stand up to our bullies, but other's bullies as well. Don't say it doesn't happen. Don't pretend like it isn't there because it is there. We just need to take care of the situation and stand up for what is right. We need to stop youth violence at the root.

Youth violence stems from more places than you think. If the perpetrators come from broken homes where they get beaten, they might think it's okay to be a bully to others or try to take out their anger on the victim. Peer pressure is also a major factor in this epidemic. A kid's friends might be picking on someone, and the kid wants to look cool and doesn't want to risk losing their friendship, so he might tag along and bully them. Maybe somebody's mother dies, and they can't seem to get over it. He or she might have an outburst of anger that she passed. Mental illnesses can also lead to violence. Things like ADHD, bipolar, ODD, conduct disorder, and things like that have angry, violent behaviors as common symptoms. These things justify what he is doing a little bit, but still not enough to take it out on another human being. If you are being a bully because of these reasons or any others that I have not mentioned, STOP RIGHT NOW. Things will just get worse for you and them if you continue to pick on others.

Youth violence is so serious that suicide from being bullied is the leading cause of death in the world for teens. It breaks my heart that kids could be so mean as to remove another's will to live because they feel like they aren't good enough. They call them things like 'retard', 'fatty', and 'ugly'. If you are called names like this, I am here to tell you to stand up for yourself. I know the words hurt. The saying with sticks and stones cannot hold a candle to the pain you are feeling because it is real. It is real. And there is a way out. I know because I was in that dark place, feeling so insecure you aren't even worth it anymore. But I was dragged out of that dank, dirty hole because I AM WORTH IT. And so are you. We need to do whatever we can to stop what is going on because people are dying. All around the world this is happening and all we need to is stand up to bullying! Try telling an adult about what is going on. I can almost guarantee that they will confront the bully, and keep you anonymous. If you see a situation go down, talk to the bully and forcefully tell him to stop. The target will thank you a hundred times over for doing what he didn't have the courage to do. You can be a savior in someone's life. If you are being a bully, stop right now. You never know what battles they're fighting. You don't need to add on to their list of problems by being a bully. They may be beaten, starved, unloved human beings and having the audacity to call them names or rough them up is just unbearable to think about. All I am asking is that we try to stand up for those that can't.

Erika De La Riva Diaz - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda Lujan

### **It Only Takes One**

I could hear them.  
All the gossip in the bathrooms.  
All the whispering about her.  
All the names they call her when she passes in the halls.  
She was my best friend.

She was depressed.  
Only I knew.  
She knew they wouldn't stop if she told someone.  
It would only continue.

Why?  
Why did they do those cruel things to her?  
She didn't do anything wrong.  
Is it because she didn't wear the "right" clothes?  
Or is it because she wasn't the same size as the other girls in the school.  
Or because she had a birthmark that cover half of her face?  
Why?

What did they get out of hurting her?  
What did they get out pushing her?  
Or punching her?  
What did they get out of spreading rumors about her?  
Popularity?  
Did they feel satisfied?  
Nothing.

I hope one day they realize what they did made her do what she did.  
Maybe they'll realize how much the hurt her and other people.  
I hope they realize that being "cool" or being in a "clique" doesn't matter.  
Being popular isn't something people have to be.  
People choose to hurt others just to be "cool" or to "fit in"

They aren't thugs.  
All they do is hurt people.  
People can only take so much, until they break.  
Some break more and faster than others.

Like she did.

She couldn't take it anymore.  
She wanted to end her own life.  
She did.

She was tired.  
Tired of all the name-calling.  
Tired of going home with bruises.  
Tired of all the nights she cried herself to sleep.  
She just couldn't take it anymore.  
She didn't want to be in a world where you had to hurt people to be "cool" or "fit in"  
In a world surrounded by violence and cruelty.  
And no one does anything about it.

So many people experience these situations.  
How many people have to take their own lives for someone to do something about it?  
1 is already way too many.  
We can all stop it.  
It only takes one.  
One person to stand up.

What can we do?  
We can do so much.  
Stand up for others.  
Stop the fight, tell someone about it.  
If you're the one that's getting hurt, don't keep quiet.  
Tell someone.  
We can all change the world.  
It only takes one.

*"Be the change that you want to see in the world"*

*-Mahatma Gandhi*

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

**The Girl Who Gave Up  
Her Voice**

When I was in elementary school I thought I knew who I was, but I let others' get to me and now I criticize every single thing I do, I second guess myself. When I was in grades kindergarten through fifth I was the student that raised her hand for every question, the student that asked questions, the student that was anxious to contribute to the discussion. That was when I thought I knew who I was. I thought I was a kid, a kid with big dreams. When I was in second grade I wanted to be an astronaut. When I was in fourth grade I had a dream of being the first female president. When I was in elementary school I thought everyone knew who they were, what they were going to be. I am in 8th grade now and I have forgotten my dreams and have not chosen which career path I would like to follow.

Fifth grade is when it started. That is when I noticed kids doubting who they knew they were. I saw kids change their image. That is when everyone started to fend for themselves. That is when I started to get bullied. I got my experiences of youth violence through verbal bullying. When I was in fifth grade I took everything to heart. I had my mind open to every idea, realistic and fantasy. I took corrections and tried as hard as I could to correct them. I was and am the kid who tried so hard to please everyone. I thought I was doing a pretty good job. But one day a couple of my classmates came up to me at recess and called me things that my fifth grade mind could not comprehend. They called me words I did not even know but knew were words that were meant to hurt. I knew because of the way they said it. They called me horrible things, they said words that I think no one, let alone fifth graders, should ever say or hear. This happened for a number of days. I took it all in. I didn't know what to do. I had never experienced anything like that before. I didn't know how to cope with it. So I did what I thought was right. I tried to forget. I tucked it away in hopes of forgetting.

About six months later me and my family moved to Herriman. My mom registered me and my brothers and sisters for school. I was in sixth grade then. I remember walking through the doors of the school. As we walked through the halls I felt those names and words slip out of their hiding place. I thought I had forgotten but I hadn't. Those names and words circled my head as I walked into my classroom. I no longer was the student that answered questions. The kids at my other school had bullied me for that, so I decided that I was not going to talk in class. I was just going to do what I was supposed to, nothing more. This was from fear of being bullied again. I thought that giving up my voice would solve my problem. But since I had taken on the role of being silent in sixth grade it soon turned into a phobia of talking to anyone at school. Teachers, classmates, administrators, just about anyone and everyone at school. I

had given myself a phobia! A phobia that I had created out of fear. It had been triggered by youth violence. A phobia that to this day is in full effect.

I think the kids at my old elementary school that bullied were broken down themselves. We lived in an area that was gloomy, with little for us, most of us were poor. The kids were cruel, but when I looked them in the eye I think I saw that they didn't want to say those things. Maybe some of them were followers. Maybe they did it because others that they were their friends did it. Maybe others did it out of pleasure. Maybe they did it because they thought it was cool or funny. I think youth violence is a big deal and it absolutely must be stopped. I know for a fact that it isn't fun to be a victim.

I know that we all have problems, we are human. But that doesn't mean we have to take it out on each other. For myself, I can, no I will break this fear and show others that have been or are in similar circumstances that I got over it and that they can too. I will be a light for others to follow, a light for good. I will try. I know it will take time and effort, but I know that one day I will get over this fear. Another way I can help detain youth violence is by being a better friend, being kinder, and more understanding. I promise to never stand, silent in the presence of a situation where a bully is harassing a victim. I know how victims feel and I would never want anyone to feel that pain.

Madilyn Mounter - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Kristy Searle

I hear it everyday. Words of cruelty echo throughout the halls of school, homes, and any public place. These words are like daggers, creating wounds that become deeper and deeper with every word. Some people think that these wounds will never heal, but in many ways they can. I see it everyday. The bright-eyed girl that sits behind you in math or the gregarious boy in history are affected by youth violence. The girl's eyes have become dulled and blank, and the boy becomes closed off and secluded. Also, I see news reports on the news about youth that have taken their lives or even the lives of others because of the effect of youth violence in their lives. This world has come to a point where its better to degrade others to make ourselves feel better about who we are, and in return we ruin the lives of others.

Youth violence can appear in many different forms. Whether it be verbal, physical, emotional, or even drug and alcohol abuse. Youth violence can be caused by anything. Whether that be trouble at home, abuse, or even video games. For some, even the slightest thing can cause a violent outbreak. Youth violence is like an infectious disease slowly and exponentially spreading and taking lives. The way I see it, we are like a mirror. Mirrors are so beautiful yet so very fragile. They often reflect who we are and our potential. Although, with every cruel word or action, our mirror begins to break.

In a normal town in a normal world there was a young girl. This young girl has so much potential, although she could not see it. In the sixth grade this young girl started to get bullied by one of her friends. Little did that young girl know that the girl bullied her because she was jealous. Jealous of all the things the young girl had and she didn't. The young girl was popular, pretty, and was kind. These were qualities the bully had, but she had not yet blossomed into them. Gradually the young girl's mirror began to crack. The cracks and chips slowly but eventually covered her entire mirror. Until one day her mirror shattered. The girl felt alone and unwanted. She became someone so hurt and broken she didn't think that she could go on. The bully's words created wounds she thought would never heal. She sat amongst her mirror's broken pieces thinking constantly, "Is this even worth it?" The remnants of who she was lay scattered and torn. The young girl started to close off from her family and friends. Her once spontaneous personality diminished and her once bright eyes faded.

One day at school one of the girls friends noticed these drastic changes in her friend. She asked what was wrong. The young girl told her friend everything. About the bullying and about how she felt she didn't belong here anymore. The girl's friend stood up for her and started putting back the pieces of her broken mirror. This young girl's friend had become her saving grace. She convinced the young girl that she was better than that and helped her see her true potential. Although the young girl's mirror had been put back together, she was never truly who she was before. This young girl, is me. I was bullied for an entire year before I

realized that I could do something about it. I confronted my bully and stood up to her, and because of that we have become good friends.

We can do something about youth violence. Sometimes all someone needs is someone who can be nice to them. If you see anybody being bullied or abused in any way. Stand up. Even though standing up for someone can be the hardest thing in the entire world, it is always worth it. Sometimes it's easier to fight a battle with more soldiers in your army. We can be someones soldier, we can be someones saving grace. We never know how close someone is to the point of having their mirror shatter. Be kind to all those who you may come in contact with, because you never know how much they need it. Youth violence is a deadly infectious disease that takes lives everyday, but we can spread the cure. The cure for youth violence is kindness. Everyone has the potential to be kind, we just have to help those who cannot yet see it, notice and embrace that divine quality.

There is always a time when we don't think that there is light in our lives. We believe that there is so much darkness and cruelty in our lives that nothing could possibly get better. There is a quote from the fictional character Albus Dumbledore that reads, "Happiness can be found in the darkest of times if only one remembers to turn on the light." We can bring light into many peoples lives. Whether that be a compliment, a simple hello from someone, or even just a smile. There are people out there right this very moment who are drowning in their own profound pool of anguish. They need us. We can stop youth violence and turn on the light for the entire world.

In closing, I encourage you to spread awareness of youth violence and stand up. Standing up for someone else can be the difference between life and death for them. Start campaigns in your community or even just say hi to someone you've never met. There is always going to be someone who just needs a little light in their darkness. We all have a choice between being a bully or a bystander. If you see an opportunity, take it . You can make someones day. Like my friend, who is still my rock, she stood up with me and that was my difference between life and death. Stand up for someone or even stand with them and great things will come out of it.

Christian Riser – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Whitney Lee

## **Violence Is Not Okay**

Violence is a terrible problem in our world today. This is a combination of rudeness, meanness, and bullying. Violence looks a lot like putting people in tears or in pain. What this sounds like is sobbing and cruelty. Violence feels like weakness and shame on the victim and the bully. This is an extremely dangerous thing that can leave the victim very melancholy. Violence can really crush someone, scarring them for life. Bullying is one of the biggest problems for the youth of our nation in which we live. We should not participate in violence or show it to any of our peers. As Jim C. Hines once said, "Bullying is not okay. Period."

Violence has affected many people including myself. I was very sad the day some kid I knew in fifth grade said the rudest thing anyone has ever said to me. We were playing a game at recess and then he said something that I will never forget. He said, "You're too fat to run!" Although this isn't the only violence that has affected me and my family. A year ago, there was a Draper cop who was shot and killed a few blocks from my house. This was indirect yet it still greatly affected me. My dad also had a traumatic experience at his old high school. There were two students having an argument in the cafeteria. One of them pulled out a gun that he stole from his dad. He shot the other student right in the face. The student died almost instantly. Just viewing the scene of the dead student has scarred my dad for life.

Why do these things happen? What makes these people do terrible things? What are the causes of these terrible acts that are destroying our safe community? Some say

the cause of this is drugs and alcohol that have taken over the minds of the youth. Others say this is caused by peer pressure. Sometimes people get tempted to do bad things, even their own friends. There are many other ideas of these causes. I believe that a really effective reason is bad parenting. A lot of these kids have had their parents divorce or have been abused by their parents. These kids get mad at their parents and take it out on other people. Or they see what their parents do, and so they copy them. It is very difficult to prevent these things. Difficult, but not impossible.

These terrible things must be prevented, but how? How can we stop these terrible acts from happening in our nation? We must all work together to end violence. If we can be kind to each other and not judge one another, then we can stop it, or at least slow it down. We should be friends with everyone in our community. Any victims out there, this message is for you. If you are being bullied, do not keep it a secret. Tell an adult or friend. The longer you wait, the worse it will get. In our school, we should be more concerned and we should have more bully prevention days. I personally can help prevent violence by being a friend to everybody and help the victims. Those kids can't stop it on their own. Stop bullying now!

Violence is not cool. We cannot let these terrible things keep happening around us. This terrible dilemma must end. Us as individuals should unite against violence. Don't be a bystander, help a victim that is in need of comfort and help. If a victim gets affected, it could lead to affecting families, which could also lead to disturbing our community. If we could end bullying I believe the world would be a better and safer place to be. I as an individual can help eliminate this terrible problem by caring for others and

not being a bystander in a time of need. In the words of Marina Cohen, "You have no power over me." Together we can do this. Stand up, speak out! Let's end bullying and violence.

Patricia Salgado - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda Lujan

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

*-Mahatma Gandhi*

### ***Broken Stars***

At the dead of night,  
I sneak outside where the darkness of the sky  
Never ends and all around I hear  
The tones and speeches of hundreds of  
Animals and insects.  
I gaze up at where the  
Broken stars stand.  
The insults, the words,  
The humiliation,  
They all fill my head  
And remind me who  
I used to be.

I used to be outgoing.  
I used to live as if tomorrow was never to come.  
But now the thoughts engulf me and bounce against my head  
Like a Ping-Pong ball and  
It's all I can do to just sit there and  
Let the game happen inside of me.

Why did this have to be?  
Was it the way I looked,  
The way I dressed,  
The way I acted?

No, I'll tell you why.  
It's because of the  
***Discrimination.***  
It's because of the  
***Savagery,***  
It's because big, powerful daddy  
Used to do it to poor and sweet mommy  
And she always said it was okay

So why should any juvenile think otherwise?

It's not because they're bad.

No, no one is truly

Atrocious,

Ruthless,

*Bad.*

It's because of what they noticed, what they learned,

What they experienced.

They live as rats,

Scared of whose over there

Trembling for what is already here,

Wondering how to hunt,

How to eat,

How to think for themselves without the

People we once thought cared about us

Start controlling what we are forced to

Believe as true.

We are puppets,

Tied by thin string

From limb to limb;

Our very movements are controlled by

Marijuana,

Alcohol,

Brutality...

Some people are smart enough and strong enough to cut the string off,

To learn how to walk by themselves

Despite being stumbling ragdolls.

Their teachers, their therapists,

Their names are Devotion and Belief.

Devotion shows us the ropes

Even if we have to tie thread by thread,

Knot by knot.

Devotion helps us forget the past

To live as if you will not see tomorrow,

And to some of us that is not just

A "hang in there" poster;

That is what we fear.

We fear that brother will kill brother

That Sister will be going out at night  
And paying for more of her  
Medication without a prescription  
And that Brother and Sister  
Will not open their eyes from their  
Long sleep.

Belief is our guidance.  
Everyone has to have something they believe in,  
Something they worship whether it is Buddha or Christianity.  
It is the one piece that fills in the whole puzzle  
And if we don't have that  
Then what do we have?  
Are we just left with a picture never completed and shoved under the couch  
To never be put together?

Like I said,  
No one is truly selfish.  
They are uneducated,  
Without belief,  
Without directions.  
But I will sit with Sister  
And read her a book.  
I will show her who I pray to.  
I will hand her a map  
And point out capitals and landmarks  
Because if no one demonstrates  
Then how will Sister know  
Which road to take?

It was a challenge to forgive the one  
Who stabbed knives into my heart and  
Threw chaos into my head,  
But they were mindless,  
Just like every student who walks into a classroom.

It is not my job to sit.  
It is not my job to wander.  
It is my job to communicate what I know  
And serving the duty to answer  
If Sister wants to grasp onto  
More.

So as I lie here, staring into an abyss of darkness and light,

I know that not every kid will see death,  
Not every kid will see discernment,  
Not every kid will see cruelty,  
Because we will finally find the empathy in ourselves  
That has been hiding underneath flesh and bones.

Organs and skeletons don't make a person.  
What makes a person is  
Morality and Mortality,  
And if you cannot make out the differences between those two  
Simple words  
Then you still have yet to become a  
Teacher for the ones  
That need to be taught.

You yet to have the wonderful patience inside you  
To look up at the sky  
And know that all you will ever see  
Will be  
Broken stars.

**Madalyn White - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Mike Farnsworth**

Youth violence affects my life every day whether I hear about it in the news or towards someone I know or care about. In fact this November, one of my cousins, Braden Emerson, was murdered due to youth violence. In high-school age he began a drug addiction and started hanging out with the people that made poor choices. His life just went downhill from there. One night he was involved in a drug deal gone terribly wrong. When the police arrived to the crime scene, they discovered a bullet in the backseat of an abandoned car surrounded by blood. There were no bodies to be found but we were told it was his blood, and that he was most likely dead. People's actions have such a ripple effect. It has greatly affected my parents and my extended family. I could see the look in my parent's eyes and how they felt about this incident. It's sad to think that his life changed dramatically because of a few wrong choices that led to bigger and more serious consequences. It's also disappointing because he could have lived a much different and better life. He was an amazing runner and set all sorts of records. Unfortunately he struggled in school and his grades prohibited him from being on the school track team. He probably could've even gotten a good scholarship if he worked on his grades and kept up with his talent. It was a big disappointment to him not to make the team based on poor academic performance. However, instead of channeling that into the desire to do better or seek out other positive option he chose drugs. He dabbled in it at first and then became more heavily involved. Eventually his drug use led him to do things like theft which he normally wouldn't do. When we were together he was so fun and easy going. But he met a tragic end. His killer is still unidentified. When I see and hear of these things happening, they're horrible things, but they also help teach me crucial lessons that help me understand how to live a successful and meaningful life, and why I should never participate or be involved in violence or drugs. We all have so much potential inside us and it's important that we realize that and don't throw it all away. Like the great William Shakespeare once said, "It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves."

Youth violence can be caused by many things. Abuse at home, self-esteem issues, or peer pressure. I think a lot of the time people do it because it's amusing or makes them feel more superior. When I picture a bully, I think of the stereotypical big gruff kid picking on a scrawny, little nerd. But in actually bullies are everywhere, coming in all shapes and sizes. You wonder why they do it, why they're mean, why they always want to pick a fight or why they just always want to cause trouble. I think it makes them feel more important, like they have more worth than others, but we're all humans, we all have feelings and we all can be hurt. Everybody has flaws or something they're self conscious about, and when people point out these imperfections we react. Some of us just keep quiet and try to ignore them, but then others react by getting self defensive and noting our flaws too. They try to hide their defects by tearing other people down to boost themselves up. As individuals develop self confidence and awareness it is important to understand how to appreciate the differences in others and ourselves without pulling others down. Numerous things can precipitate youth violence, but to me, I think this is one of the main reasons. "Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to become a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself." - Harvey Fierstein. Although there will always be people who try to bring you down, don't let them, and don't do it to others. You never know what people are going through, and even though what they're

doing is wrong, they may be going through tough times themselves. This is why you always have to be positive and never become the bully yourself. Unfortunately I have another relation, a cousin that is special needs. He has difficulty interacting with others and is socially awkward and developmentally below his peers. Although most people try to be kind, kids are not sure how to act around him and will avoid him. Occasionally someone will tell him he can't play with them or he is "stupid." He feels angry and sad when this happens. Bullying can be more overt or subtle, but neither are o.k.

One thing anyone can do anywhere they go is being positive and supportive. Just by doing simple things like smiling at someone when they're having a bad day, or inviting someone who doesn't have a lot of friends to sit by you at lunch can make a big impact on their life, even if you don't realize. I know sometimes we don't think that we can make a difference in the world, we're just one person out of billions, so why should we even try? Well, Mother Teresa knew exactly why, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." Sometimes you just look at the billions of people in the world as a whole, but you overlook the individual people that you encounter everyday. Those are the people that you can help, the people that you can affect in a good way. Another perceptive quote from Mother Teresa is, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one." You can do a lot to stop youth violence by being a supportive friend to someone and standing up for them if they're being bullied. You can become an influential person in their life, and help guide them into making prudent decisions, where without you, they might have ended up making foolish and reckless choices that could lead to youth violence. As a community, you can help organize or participate in programs that would help prepare and develop youth to become mature adults. By creating safe environments, having a positive atmosphere in your community, and trying to be your best self everyday, it can help reduce youth violence. Sadly for my cousin he has become another youth violence statistic, however, I know that through continued outreach his story may prompt others to take caution, accept the help offered them, and be a positive role model.

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

*Honorable Mention*

*To Boy and Girl per School*

*Keegan Alfrey*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Union Middle School  
Teacher, Christina Van Dam**

*Calli Chase*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Delta Middle School  
Teacher, Colleen Atkinson**

*Jeremy Chavez*

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

*Brinley Cornell*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Kanab Middle School  
Teacher, Jeanine Johnson**

*Colette Dunn*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Union Middle School  
Teacher, Debra Thorpe**

*Sally Easton*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Lisa McDonald**

*Jaxton Goller*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Lisa McDonald**

*Kaiden Huntsman*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Delta Middle School  
Teacher, Colleen Atkinson**

*Ali Khandoker*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Union Middle School  
Teacher, Debra Thorpe**

*Lilian Nguyen*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Draper Park Middle School  
Teacher, Whitney Lee**

*Gabe Oldham*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spanish Fork Junior High  
Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence**

*Macady Pulham*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spanish Fork Middle School  
Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence**

*Justin Reidhead*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Kanab Middle School  
Teacher, Jeanine Johnson**

*Raechel Ward*

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

*Sydney Wilkinson*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Union Middle School  
Teacher, Christina Van Dam**

**Keegan Alfrey - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Union Middle School - Teacher, Christina Van Dam**

Bullying is something everyone goes through at one time or another. Don't let bullies (mean people) put you down, all they are looking for is attention. Once you show them it doesn't hurt you anymore they will not care and in most cases stop bullying you. If someone is bullying you don't dig yourself into the hole of self pity because the longer you feel like that the harder it is going to be to dig yourself out of that hole. The only way out is to talk to someone about it, stand up for yourself, make some friends that will stand up for you and make you feel good about who you are.

Youth violence affects me every day. I have experienced bullying in the past from being called names to being tripped in the hallway. The bullies were really bringing me down until I was able to realize I have worth. I know that I have friends that care about me and that there are people out there that truly like who I am. Realizing those things helped me to stop my bullies from bringing me down. That makes the world of difference. But the kids that bully me aren't nice caring people. They are people that feel they need to be mean to not only me but to my friends. They feel they have the right to be jerks just because we are younger. And once they have their sights on you they don't stop. They get their friends to bully you too. You spend all day long just trying to avoid them. I used to be a scared little kid just trying to survive the day.

I think that youth violence is caused by people that are insecure and that feel they need to make someone else look bad. Bullies like to make people laugh at someone else so that they are not in the spotlight, that way people won't see how bad he/she is as a person. Well that is not right to the victim. In my first hand experience of bullying it was terrible, bullies that you see every day always looking at you, making you feel like you're a freak, or like they hate you.

We can stop bullying by being nice and kind to everyone. Also by being more respectful of people and their beliefs etc. We can push for a more strict system of anti bullying. If you get caught bullying then you will be punished accordingly for your actions. We could also make it easier for victims to tell a teacher and express their feelings. Then in turn the bully will be able to express their feelings so that we can help them become better people. Imagine if the bully only got punished and didn't get the chance to be a better person. We can encourage people to stand up to bullies so the victims don't feel alone, this way the victim will know they have a friend when they need one the most.

In conclusion make sure that if you are being bullied to stand up for yourself and know you are not alone. Make sure you make a friend that you can trust and that's there for you. If you are the bystander of bullying then try to stand up for the victim and let them know that they are not alone. Because that is what you will or already have needed in your time of need when you are bullied. Bullying is something everyone goes through at one time or another. If you are being bullied then just stop reacting, that will stop most bullies in their tracks. You will not be bullied anymore, normally. Will you be part of the solution or part of the problem?

Calli Chase - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Delta Middle School - Teacher, Colleen Atkinson

## Bullying

“Bullying: Unwanted, aggressive behavior between two or more people.”

That doesn't sound too bad, does it? Just a couple of friends joking around with each other, right? Or is it?

To be honest, I've never liked to learn or listen to presentations about bullying. I don't like to listen to people talk about how their bullying experience changed the way they saw the world. What I've never realized though, is that there is always a change made in the stories. Even if it's tiny! Think about it. In the usual stories, someone stands up for the person or people being bullied. It took just one person, to turn someone else's whole day around! If nobody stood up for them, do you think they would have a great day after that? Probably not. I'm not telling you to change the whole world! If you need to, start small. Say hello or even just smile at someone who looks like they're having a bad day. Lend a helping hand to someone who looks like they might need your help. Clean up a little around the house! Get your homework in on time! Hold the door open for someone at the post office! These are all simple, little things that we do or can do every single day! I found a quote by Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a roman philosopher, that says, “Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness.” This quote is all kinds of amazing. If we do one, little act of kindness a day, we have done 365 acts of kindness by the end of the year! If we do more than one act of kindness a day, and I'm almost positive that we all do, imagine how many acts of kindness you have done by the end of the year and how many people you have helped! One of those acts of kindness could be standing up for someone being bullied or not to be the bully yourself.

Sometimes bullying is simply disrespecting another person. We need to respect the people around us. I found a quote by Jackie Robinson

that reads, "I'm not concerned with you liking or disliking me...All I ask is that you respect me as a human being." People may not like you, but that doesn't mean they bully you. On the other hand, if they disrespect you and treat you badly you may be being bullied.

If you are being bullied, you can try to put a stop to it by yourself, but what if that doesn't work? You need to tell someone that can help you or give you advice on how to make it stop. Just make sure you tell someone that you feel comfortable trusting. You can tell your parents, teacher, guardian, grandparents, and even principal! They will try to work it out with you. People think they aren't being cool if they tell an adult about a bullying problem. Children at my school think it's cool if you're not the tattler. But they don't realize that if nobody tells an adult, it will continually happen and never stop! If you need help, just ask someone! Don't be afraid!

Girls bully just as much as guys do. I have a friend who likes to be the center of attention sometimes. But in order for her to be noticed, she feels that she has to bully other people. It makes her feel higher than everyone else by putting others down. She needs to know that she can get the same attention if she is kind to everyone. You don't have to bully to be cool or accepted, I promise that if you're kind to everyone, all your problems will work themselves out!

This year we had the opportunity to write poems like Dr. Seuss and read them to the kindergarteners! My poem was about a town that was famous for bullying. This is the poem I wrote.

## Shneeberweezer-ville

Shneeberweezer-ville was once crawling with shneezers,  
Two-legged creatures who were quite the teasers!

They hopped around all day and all night,  
Hoping to give each other a fright!

Then one day Mayor ShneezerMcweezer  
Declared that he was indeed the best teaser.

Later one shneezer stood up on a stand,  
And said, "I have a plan that is so very grand!"

"We shall put your teasing to the test!  
If you win, then we'll know your the best!"

All cheered, except Twiddle-Diddle-Dum-Daroo,  
Who felt it was wrong to tease me and you.

"Let the games begin," said Mayor ShneezerMcweezer.  
"For we all know I'm going to win!" chuckled the old geezer.

All cheered except Twiddle-Diddle-Dum-Daroo,  
Who felt it was wrong to tease me and you.

"Why aren't you cheering?" asked her best friend.  
She replied, "Because teasing isn't a good trend."

She left the crowd, feeling quite blue.  
If only there was something she could do.

"Yes!" she had thought up a plan.  
And then back to the village she ran.

She knew that she had to do something.  
So she spoke to all the shneezers, erupting.

“It’s wrong to tease, don’t you know!  
It’s wrong to tease even so!

Instead of being mean, old shneezers,  
Why don’t we become shneezer pleasers!”

The crowd was quiet, lost in thought.  
Then one cheered, and one did not.

The mayor did not agree,  
with her plan and said, “This cannot be!”

The shneezers, however, liked the plan.  
And clapped, and clapped, and clapped their hands!

All cheered including Twiddle-Diddle-Dum-Daroo,  
Who had done it and made shneezers new!

All the shneezers changed that day,  
From the mayors’ plan they walked away.

In the end we know,  
That Shneeberweezer-ville has a new glow.

Shneeberweezer-ville was once crawling with shneezers  
And now it’s crawling with shneezer pleasers!

Everyone in the town liked to bully except for one little girl who felt that it was wrong to bully people. In the end of the story, she found a way to turn the town’s attitude about bullying around. She taught the whole town that bullying was wrong. How come we can’t be more like her?

I haven’t experienced bullying as much as other people, but I still recognize it when it happens. I try my best to compliment people, say

hello, and help out every once in a while. I am setting a new goal to compliment at least one person every day. I'm not changing the whole world, I am just doing my part to be kind, helpful, and respectful to everybody and to try to avoid bullying.

Jeremy Chavez - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kim Irvine

Violence

Does the word “violence” make you think? When you hear that word does it make you remember? It is among those certain words that are especially poignant in a special way for everyone. What is violence? I am reading a book called “Divergent” just now. There are five different factions in this book, and although I am not very far yet, I believe I can draw something from this book’s beginning. One faction believes that the problem is lack of courage. Another is lack of love. Then there is lack of selflessness, knowledge, and truth. Perhaps none of these are wrong, but none of these are really right either. To altogether eradicate violence we need a mix of every one of these attributes. When you observe a bully and a victim, you see all of these ARE missing. If even one of these attributes was present then this wouldn’t happen at all, but if all of them were present then not only would they stop the bullying, but they would understand why they stopped fighting. Violence is the lack of, even if temporarily, these attributes.

But what causes violence? When someone verbally abuses someone is it for absolutely no reason at all? I don’t believe anyone wants to hurt others after they have, but they still do before. They are angry, envious, and other things that last only for a limited time, and if you vent all your hatred on someone else the pleasure you expect lasts only a nanosecond before it dissipates like shifting sand dunes that change before your eyes and leave you utterly, hopelessly lost. Violence isn’t caused by nothing at all, it is caused by everything, everything in a tempest of utter despair and memories. It is a vicious cycle because when one person is hurt by another they learn to hurt, and it just goes on, and on, and on. All because of one second of bad decision. I remember something I did in literally kindergarten. I said something mean to my friend, and I STILL remember. Does he remember? Probably not, but I do. I think for all the people that have done worse what do they feel?

Violence affects everyone. Not just people in war, or on TV. In fact it affects you the moment you hear about it doesn’t it? How have you been bullied or been the bully? Sometimes you are neither. Sometimes *I* am neither, but it always seems worse that way. I sometimes see someone being cruel. Maybe no one cares except me, but that’s the thing. *I* care what I see. *I* know I had the power to help, but in the end I am just as cowardly as the bully, and it hurts.

*“You know, sometimes the world seems like a pretty mean place.”*

-Bill Watterson, “Calvin and Hobbes”

I have just begun to realize the mean things I can say without meaning it. I feel pretty awful about things like this, and wish I could take back those words. A couple of times I have apologized soon after something like this, and it is surprising how much better it can make you feel. I think that if everyone had the ability to see their mistakes and the courage to apologize then the world would be better. Just imagine if people thought before they said anything.

*“Sometimes when I’m talking, my words can’t keep up with my thoughts. I wonder why we think faster than we speak. Probably so we can think twice.”*

-Bill Watterson

I sit there. This is my friend. I know this person. I have to stop this! Tomorrow? Yes, then. But you know you won’t will you? You say you will, but you won’t! They won’t stop picking on him. This is wrong I know it is! He is angry too though. He is becoming like them. The foul language. The insults. I wish I wasn’t who I am. If I were stronger. If I were better. If I were braver. I endure. Everyone endures, but if they have become nothing except an empty shell then that is all they do. Please, someone else do what I cannot! No one does. I am a coward. I am there. It is over. I cannot bear myself! Tomorrow then? Yes, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow...

What CAN I do to stop violence? Rather what can we do to stop violence? I believe you can truly help in ways by raising awareness. I've heard of bullying. Who hasn't? But I have more fully seen its effects after reading books. In the "Unwind" series you see what desperate people will do. They see that teen uprisings are the whole reason they are in their current predicament, but if people had reacted better, kinder, then this would not be happening. For some reason people don't ever live peaceably really, and that might be because no one is willing to give up a little to gain a lot. So that too. To get rid of violence people need to share. It is something you learn when you are 3 years old and yet no one seems to know how to do it! Share your courage, your kindness, your knowledge, your selflessness, and your truth. All you need to do is understand what violence is to get rid of it, and maybe just doing little things is the way to really set in motion the greater, grander things that you will remember your whole life.

End-all

Tears are crystal shards that shatter on the cold, unforgiving earth  
Anger is a raging firestorm let loose upon the surrounding life  
Words become a painful, relentless attack upon the defenseless heart  
A friend becomes a guardian of all to block all blows thrown at a terminal velocity  
Hope that shines forth when needed to become what you need  
Not only can you endure, but you can evolve and become more  
You can grow strong roots that hold you down and feed you strength  
In the end you realize that it might have been hard, but it was worth it  
The end of all  
Is not what you expected  
But that is not a bad thing

Brinley Cornell - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Kanab Middle School - Teacher, Jeanine Johnson

Youth Violence

Feeling sad, torn, or broken, why do we have youth violence? Youth Violence can start many different ways like bullying or maybe a home situation. We don't know why youth violence happens but sometimes it happens at the home with parents or siblings. Because of this, youth are worried and scared of their classmates, other people, even their own parents and that can be really hard on them. I have never experienced youth violence in my past, but I do know that it can be really hard for others.

I know that one of my very best friends has a dad that used to beat her fairly badly when her mom was away but was too afraid to tell her about it. Now she is still affected by what her dad did to her and she will never know what it could've been like if her dad had treated her kinder. She came over to my house one time for dinner and after, she came over to me and told me how she wished her parents were that nice to her and that she always felt very loved at my house.

Some people don't know how to control youth violence like my friend or tell someone what is really happening. They might think that if they do tell someone then they might end up getting hurt or threatened, maybe even worse than that. I know of some girls in my grade that were having a certain type of youth violence happen to them but would refuse to tell anyone. I've asked them why and they just said that they were afraid of getting into trouble. Youth are too afraid of being hurt or getting into trouble if they tell someone what's happening so they don't tell and sometimes that person can turn into a mean person or a bully. A quote written by Harvey Fierstein said " Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life, but define yourself." I thought that was a pretty cool quote and how it said, "Don't allow yourself to be made a victim,"

because if you are being bullied or anything that has to do with youth violence, don't be made the victim.

Bullying is another type of youth violence that a lot of people go through and can't control. Bullying is a serious problem that will happen anywhere at any time. People who bully just think, "Oh its no big deal we are just messing around," but it really is a big deal to the person being bullied. You don't know what goes on at their home or what their background is like. Then why do we do it? If it continues to go on sometimes it can get to as bad as where the person may even commit suicide.

As you can see there are many ways to youth violence that we don't even realize are a type of youth violence. We can prevent bullying, child abuse, and many other ways that have to do with youth violence by simply just standing up to someone or by being a friend to the bully and show them that we are all different than others.

Colette Dunn - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Union Middle School - Teacher, Debra Thorpe

Physical Violence is a major problem. Not just for this generation, but for the past generations too. Not only is physical violence a punch to the face, it's also referred to as bullying. Yet bullying has still led to violence, including self-harm and suicide. I can tell you from personal experience, being bullied really sucks. It affects people, how they view themselves and the world. One of schools urgent problems is to try and stop those bullies. How do we stop them?

From personal experience, Being bullied sucks. its hard to put up with and still view yourself as important, or needed. I've been pushed into the lockers at school. I've been called names such as slut and stupid, yet I have never told anyone about it. Because of that the bully could say or do whatever they wanted to. The worst part is that the victim doesn't know why the bully is doing it. You don't know what you did to deserve to be bullied.

Bullying is seen everywhere, In movies, books, schools, and houses. Gossip is heard every day and physical violence is everywhere. Students at school will pick on the ugly girl or the boy thats gay pushing them around after school. Bullies follow the victim home, on social media, the bullies continue to be rude. On Instagram I have seen rude comments like, "Shes ugly." or "I hope she goes and dies in a hole." Even in homes bullying can occur. Being a mean older brother or sister is still a form of bullying. Although, You can always catch yourself gossiping, teasing and talking behind someones back. You still need to be kind to everyone no matter their appearance, or things they did. Don't say anything that can offend others.

Bullying can cause serious damage to the victim. You may not see the scars that are forming, but they are there. A bully can cause the victim to see themselves and the world differently. To see themselves as worthless, dead space and not wanted. And the world might been seen as horrible and cruel. Yet the bully see's the world in a different perspective. Bullies don't see the scars that they are forming on the victim and themselves. Especially for cyber bullies, They can't see the other end of the screen. They can't see how hurt the victim has become. Bullies have caused victims to 'cut' and in extreme cases, suicide.

What causes bullying? Its hard to say why bullies find it satisfying to bully the weak but the main reason seems to be for attention. Attention seeking people will do anything to have attention. Even if it means picking on someone else. Stealing pencils and erasers every day from the same person is a form of bullying. Some people want to be noticed but don't know a better way to approach the situation. A better way to approach this is to not steal others peoples stuff, but to talk to someone, have a

conversation. No one likes an attention seeking bully. Stealing people pencils every day only makes the problem worse. Another reason bullying can occur is jealousy, being jealous because another girl has better cloths, or more friend, looks better, or is smarter. Bullying can also occur in hatred. Picking on a person because of something small they did in the past that you have never lived down. It's never fair to be bullied, no matter the reason.

So how do we stop bullying? Really, we can't stop bullying completely. There will always be a group of kids that make fun of someone. But there are ways to prevent it from happening. To stop your bully from messing with you, Try the Stop, Talk and Walk. Union has taught students this method of the right way to deal with a bully.

1. Stop: Ask the bully to stop. You don't think its funny. Never talk back to bully. It will only make matters worse. The bully is looking for a reaction, Talking back will only satisfy the bully
2. Walk: Walk away from the bully and tell a counselor, Teacher, or a Parent.
3. Talk: Talk to someone about the bully and how they have affected you.

Whenever you find yourself in the wrong place, Remember the Stop, Talk and Walk. Bullying is terrible thing that changes people's lives and in extreme cases, ending a life. It changes how others veiw the world. Bullying is caused by attention seekers, jealousy, and hatred. And even though it can be hard, try never to bully.

Sally Easton - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Butler Middle School - Teacher, Lisa McDonald

When we think of a bully, we think of someone who physically abuses someone else by spitting tripping, hitting, kicking, stealing, or breaking things that aren't theirs. But there are other kinds of bullies too, like the one who says or writes mean thing about others and spreads rumors and other kinds of lies. There is also the Cyber-bully who uses social media like email or instant message to post mean messages to hurt or embarrass others. This is youth violence even when it is not physically hurting someone else.

Bullying has affected my life in many ways. It brings fear and tension in my life even when I am not the direct victim. Because of bullying I feel I can't trust a lot of people except my really good friends who I know will stick by me! It seems to me most bullies and people who are victims of bullies are sad and depressed; I want to live a happy life not a sad, depressing life. I sometimes feel guilty for not helping others who have been bullied because I was too scared to stand up or speak out. Bullying has affected my altitude on my life.

An author, Susanne Colansanti once said "Keep holding on if you see someone being bullied, make it stop. Why is that so hard for us to do?" I have never had an experience of being bullied myself, but I have witnessed a guy being bullied. It made me feel sick to my stomach. I felt mad, sad and frustrated as I sat with my friends at lunch. A group of boys were bullying another boy, pushing him around and saying mean things to him. You could see the anger in the boy's face rise as fists were made and punches thrown. I sat there too scared to move or say anything. I told my friend sitting next to me about what was going on and she had courage to get up and go tell the assistant principal. I will never forget how I felt, I wanted to cry, and I didn't have the courage to stand up for the boy. I froze with fear and concern for the boy who was being bullied. Bullies have no right to do the things that they do.

Bullies are often insecure people who are pretending to be tough. Usually they are unable to properly deal with life's stresses and act out poorly. We all have fears but bullies try to hide their own fears. Audrey Hepburn once said "The most important thing is to enjoy your life to be happy it's all that matters." Everyone has insecurities and fears, but not everyone acts like a bully. I wonder if bullies just don't know how to deal difficulties and stress, perhaps they lack the support of good friend and parents to help them.

Perhaps we need to better understand the causes of bullying like, depression, bad family life, jealousy, loneliness, hatred, fear, want (or need) for attention, desire for control, stress and anger. We are all in this together. Everyone has these kinds of challenges in life, what is different is how we deal with those challenges. Reaching out to family and friends when life's difficulties weigh us down is one way to avoid becoming a bully.

Victims of bullies can not only be physically hurt, but can have emotional scars that last a lifetime, they often live in fear, have depression and anxiety, they feel worthless and lonely. No one deserves to be forced into this kind of life. A bully might get puffed up when they tear someone else down, but how does a victim regain their self-esteem?

What can we do to help bullying victims? One thing we can do is reach out to them and be their friend, because everyone deserves a friend. Stand together as a community and vow not to allow

bullying to happen in our community. Let's stop bullying altogether!! Involve an adult, teacher or councilor- Seek HELP!!!! We need community awareness of how to properly deal with life stresses to benefit both the victim and the bully.

Bullying affects everyone. It affects our community by breaking up relationships and disturbs peace. It causes fear, sadness and depression. If left unchecked it will continually spread like cancer. It can leave lifetime emotional scars from the traumatic event. As a community we need to help make a safer more friendly, Bully-less." environment. We need to stand together to not allow bullying to happen, to get programs and resources to help bullies or victims of bullies like therapy, counselor. Reach out to victims of bullies who need help getting over their fear and depression. Even reach out to bullies themselves who need help to stop bullying others in hurtful ways. Seek help from adults, teachers and counselors because they can help you in many ways. Stand up for what is right even if you stand alone. You will never be alone if you seek help from someone who cares about you. As I wrote this essay the main thing that popped into my head is "Let's stand together to STOP BULLYING in our community, school and the internet." Let's stop it from happening because BULLYING is not necessary in life.

Jaxton Goller - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Butler Middle School - Teacher, Lisa McDonald

One of main causes for youth bullying is Depression. Depression is a mental illness that makes the affected feel depressed and have a lower sense of self esteem for themselves, but some children or teens feel that they should be on top and by trying to become the alpha wolf, they put others down physically or and mentally harming the victim.

Another cause of youth bullying is bad family lives this is a factor because the bully is mad at his or her home life in which The bully is a victim of being bullied as well and they (he or she) need an outlet for their troubles that are created or passed on from their home lives and that outlet is being a bully because that is the only kind of outlet they have ever been taught and know about because of their parents or siblings. They also feel like they need to fill their lives with other people in their lives, this creates gangs that are filled with people have similar interests and similar experiences.

One of my previous experiences with youth violence is that I was actually a victim of being bullied. it was in the year two thousand eleven, while i was in elementary school. so, i have previous first hand experience with bullies and have knowledge of what goes on in their home life and what they do to the victims that are bullied.

Other than that one experience with bullying there is not really many other self experiences with bullying, on the other hand, i have heard many, many accounts of youth bullying through my peers and family members as well as on the news at least once a month they are "newsworthy". Most of those accounts are verbal abuse and some physical abuse with children and teens no matter what the age group is the people whom are getting bullied must carry a burden around with them their entire lives that the bully gave them the task to carry and that is all of the bullies problems which are basically multiplied because people that bully and are trying to get rid of their problems through bullying are giving all or more of the problems to the victim and then the load on the bully is suppressed but is still there, all the emotions, and all of the experiences. Though it gives them a rush of a feeling better about themselves they finally get pushed under the normal line and start feeling the weight of all the bullying and finally break down.

There are many types of fixes to bullying, this includes therapy. Therapy helps retrain the bullies mind to be able to have other ways to let their feelings out in a better more constructive way. Such as speaking or having a hobby like sports or building sheds or birdhouses to make it so they will not bully more people and also, they will have a better outlet that will lighten the load for the bully and therefore not having more victims and less bullies.

<sup>A</sup>  
having

Kaiden Huntsman - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Delta Middle School - Teacher, Colleen Atkinson

## STOP BULLYING

I've been bullied many times, and bullied people before. One time I say was the worst was probably during wrestling, I was bullied by the coaches and teammates, the team mates was the worst. I was called fat and some people would even say "I don't even see why you try, you suck at everything you do." This made me feel like theres no reason to live and it made me feel worthless.

I would also get made fun of for another reason such as the clothes I would were and how short I am. The coaches would give a lot a crap because I couldn't run ten sprints in 35 seconds. And because the wrestling thing I'm not wrestling anymore. I would love to wrestle but I'm just afraid to be bullied to the point I can't take it.

So know I try so hard to stop bullying and not to bully. I'm trying to forgive everybody that has bullied me because when I leave this world I don't want to have a grudge against anyone, and how I'm to forgive them is by not bullying them and forget about all the times I was bullied. The way you can forgive someone for bullying is just by being nice, waving at them every time you see them, saying hi every time you see them to.

Why do people bully their classmates? I believe people bully is because they are insecure and lack of confidence and they try to impress other students. I think the reason they are insecure and have a lack of confidence is it could be that they are bullied and beat at home so they take out all their anger on other people to build their confidence. Bullying occurs on a regular basis in many schools every day

Bullying is a really bad thing to do it can kill people and even scar people for there whole life, it could have people not even go outside and around people. At least 4400 deaths a year. Over 14 percent of high schoolers have considered suicide almost 7 percent have attempted it. 10-14 year old girls have a higher risk of suicide.

I think we should listen to stomp out bullying ads because there is so many lives that end each year that could've been saved by not bullying and being nice. There is no reason to bully, everybody is equal inside maybe not on the outside but we all have the same in the inside, so the only thing that is different is the race and the color of our skin. Bullying can happen in school, at home, or in public places such as the park, mall, and a whole bunch of more places. Bullying is everywhere, this is the reason we need to "stomp out bullying".

How would it make me feel if somebody started to bully someone in my family? I would actually do the wrong thing and probably go after them and beat them up, because i have really bad anger issues. The reason I wrote this essay is to stop bullying because bullying is the a really bad thing to do to people.

Ali Khandoker - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Union Middle School - Teacher, Debra Thorpe

## Lend a Hand and be a Friend

Bullying is a terrible topic to discuss but here are some of my experiences with it. Bullying: A person who is habitually cruel or overbearing, especially to smaller or weaker people.

Some people start off with a chessy story but I will start this story off with a facts. In schools 1 in 4 teachers see nothing wrong with bullying and will only intervene 4% of the time. 67% of students think that schools react poorly to bullying. Also, 1 in 10 students drop out of school because of repeated bullying. Approximately 160,000 students skip school because of bullying, and 3.2 million students are victims of bullying each year. Studies show that people abused by their peers are at risk for mental health problems, such as low self-esteem, stress, depression, or anxiety. The studies also show that they might be going through suicidal thoughts as well. People bully because they are going through tough things or they are hurt inside.

You might be asking yourself what you can do about it. Well here are some answers for your question. For some people that are young like in the 2 to 12 range they might tell a trusted adult about the situation that needs to be taken care of. If you tell parents, teachers, or coaches they are more likely to find ways to resolve the problem without the bully finding out how they knew. Word of advice, at any time if you think your bullying situation might escalate into physical violence try to be with somebody at all times because you never know what can happen.

Here are some survival tips for bullying.

Ignore the bully and walk away. It might be hard to not walk away but if you do the bully will probably know that you will not talk to them and they might leave you alone. Another tip is to not get physical. This might help you, and not help you in many different ways. It might help you because if there is an adult near by they might see this happening and put a stop to the problem. But if you do get physical then you are at risk of being at fault to because you got just as involved as the bully did. Also you might want to talk to a true friend and by true friend I mean somebody that won't tell anybody about what you are going through or has let anybody know any of your secrets in the past.

My experience with bullying did not happen to me but it happened to somebody that I used to know. Before I moved to Utah I used to know this little kid that was bullied by another kid at my old apartment complex. The victim was a kid who was teased because of wearing this thing on his head called a turban. Some people do this for their religious practices and some don't. He wore a turban and what it did was put his hair in a ball kind of like a ponytail but it was wrapped in fabric covering most of his hair. The kid that was bullying would bully him a lot because of this but I knew it wasn't right so I stood up for the victim I told the bully to stop and also asked him if he would like it if this were to happen to him and it worked he stopped bullying. I felt good that day because I knew that I made a difference in the world, a better difference. Thanks for reading I hope you enjoyed this story.

Lilian Nguyen – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Whitney Lee

## Our imperfect world.

According to the Oxford dictionary violence is behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. Violence can not be stopped only tamed. It is a vicious cycle that does not stop. Wars are never gone, they linger in the air, it is only a matter of time until the next one arrives. Violence is in all of us somewhere deep down trying to rise. It depends on how weak you are to give into it, to control you.

Violence does not scare or surprise me. Unlike most of the students around me I experience violence on a daily basis. When I was younger I was just an observer of my parents fighting, my mother bashing the windows of my dad's car, my brother pushing and shoving my sisters and dad so he could leave the house, a scar across my cheek from my only younger sister. Over the years I have given into it. When I was eight my family moved to Michigan. Our teacher was reading a newspaper article about a man that was arrested for assault. He was shot after he stabbed a man several times. Our teacher told us she had the same gun that he was shot with. We asked her why she had a gun and this is what she said, "The same reason that man shot the guy stabbing him. The same reason you lock your doors at night. I saw a man get shot when I was your age and twice after that. I moved twenty minutes away from the place I was raised and there are still stories like this. I have it for protection," she said it like we all should have a gun, that none of us are safe and we should all watch our backs. I liked to tell myself that's what I do it for but I was lying to myself. We had to move back to Utah because my dad was charged with a felony for fraud and was put on probation and will still be on it for at least another year. He was a lawyer at the time but was disbarred. We also found out that he cheated on my mom with a Canadian women who also had four kids at the time. This is why my mom bashed his windows. This is why my brother wanted to leave and run away. This is what lead me to violence.

Most of the kids around me don't know how it feels. When the person that is supposed to love you more than anything looks at you like a mistake, like he never wanted me or my siblings. I don't get sad, I get angry. I lay awake some nights thinking of what he does in his freetime. I wonder if he has a second family and if he loves them more. I want to make him feel the physical and emotional pain he has made all of us feel. He led me to violence and made me weaker.

People are led to violence through many things. The surroundings we grow up in. Peer pressure. Fear. Revenge. Money. In the cases we read about, the kids killing for sportswear, they couldn't afford their own, they were jealous and had no money.

They wanted what they didn't have and thought of only one way they could get it. Money issues led them to jealousy and greed which led them to violence. Some violence is justified, like using it as protection or when the Japanese bombed us during World War II and we got involved. In my opinion I do not consider weapon availability a factor to violence, it does contribute to it but does not cause it. Fear is also a big factor, drug cartel and gangs threaten or hurt people out of fear of them knowing something or what they could do to threaten their "business". Violence is in all of us, it's human nature. We all have it in us and it feeds on how weak we are, if we are willing to give into it, it has been with us since children and either grows or weakens. When someone is raised in poor surroundings it creates low self esteem, jealousy, stress, depression, gangs, substance abuse and other things that lead to violence, so bad surroundings lead to other things that lead to violence so it is like a base factor. In wars I think the factors are want for power or both sides want something or simply self defense. During World War II they were power thirsty and wanted a "perfect" world and caused a war.

Violence is almost impossible to stop. It is much easier to prevent violence than to stop it. To prevent violence in today's youth it would be helpful for the government to evaluate every foster family as an adequate parent because if foster kids are plopped into horrible surroundings they don't feel loved or important and turn to drugs, gangs, alcohol, etc. Another way our country can prevent it is to not get involved in other countries fights or problems, if we help people from other countries their enemy will target us. What our city and school can do is prevent bullying and heavier enforcement on rules and safety, and have less weapon availability to make it harder. I can help prevent violence by first of all not doing it myself and if I see bullying or violence and there is something I can do to stop it do it. I can also help raise awareness about it in the community.

Violence is physically inflicting pain or damaging a person or thing. It is a dictator, trying to overtake us and control us. It scares us, drives us, powers us. To prevent it I can not do it myself, stop it if I can and raise awareness. The world would be safer, better, happier but with a strange feeling that things aren't right. The world without violence would not be our world.

Gabe Oldham - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Spanish Fork Junior High - Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence

## Always Afraid

Has youth violence affected my life? Yes it actually has in many of ways it's affected me on all the precautions and drills we have to do at school. I mean come on they don't let us bring backpacks to class because they are afraid we will take a bomb into class I understand the safety stuff but why would someone take a bomb to school... Youth violence!

Youth violence is causing kids to doubt, hate and even think about killings themselves. Other kids will cyber bully, laugh at, shove or push other kids causing the affect of them hating themselves and who they are. I've had experience with that. Once I knew a person and that person wasnt very lets say the modern day cool and people would make fun of him and push him around I am afraid to say I participated in that bullying I am very disappointed with what I did and I did apologise. Well with all of the pushing around of him it made him start acting out. One time he exploded he couldn't handle all of it and hurt someone really badly it was very stupid of us to be doing that and not notice what was happening and what we had done to that person. I still feel very bad on what I had done and how it affected that persons life I am very sorry. I have learned from my mistakes and won't ever do that again and take it that far. I have had that experience and I know how fast and what results will happen.

What are the causes of youth violence well lots of things, depression, low self of steam, sucky accident happened to that person , I could go on and on and on there are

lots of things. Basically to sum that up the person has a past maybe not a good one or a bad one but a past. Not to long ago my baby brother died at birth me and my family were destroyed, sad, shocked at what had happened the death happened at February 17 2014 me and my family took a week stayed home mourned with each other we were devastated, we had family and friends come over they helped us with our loss they made dinner for us they brought over candy bars for us they told us life sucks and life will always suck but you have to look at the bright future ahead of you but always remember of the loved one you loss. That next tuesday i went back to school a little devastated that, that had happened but I was getting through it, I got to school and I got piled up with all of the homework i had missed when I was gone. To be honest I never thought of killing myself and I never will but I was very upset, depressed, and just angry I took it out on my brothers and sisters, classmates at school soon enough i was over it but still loved my baby brother. I learned that with all the support and love i got through it.

The way we can prevent youth violence is help the person who is sad, lonely or hurt. Cheer them up let them know they have someone who actually cares about them let them know someone loves them, knock them back into sense that ending there sad life is a dumb thing when they have so much to look forward to, let them know you care. make them accept who they are and who they are, is a great person with a great personality and is a lovely and happy, and a fun person to be around.

Macady Pulham - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Spanish Fork Junior High - Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence

## How can we stop youth violence?

Do the right thing. Think about that for a moment. How can you stop or prevent youth violence? Ask yourself these questions, how has youth violence affected your life? What are the causes of youth violence? How can you prevent youth violence?

First, how has youth violence affected my life? Well I have not really seen it but yet I have. It makes me want to cry out in pain, because of the things that are around me. It has been very sad to hear about and see the youth violence in my life. It has affected me by being myself. When I get bullied or my friend does it makes me sad. You can also stand up for those in need.

Second off, what are the causes of youth violence? I feel as as youth violence comes and goes the cause are because of someones feelings. Like if you are mad for say then you might want to punch someone. I know that when I am mad I want to hurt someone. It also is if something is going on at home. Many things cause youth violence. But manly feeling like madness or jealousy.

Last of all, how can you prevent youth violence? I know how I can prevent it. By standing by those who get bullied. One time I was at school and someone was making fun of my friend. So I stood up for her. I felt great after I did it. I also know that you can not be the bullie. If you help someone if they had a problem. Then you would also be helping the bullies not be bullied anymore. How would you feel if someone helped you even if you were a bully? I know for sure that I would be grateful for the help. I would also want to help others because of someones actions.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few things about youth violence . It is very sad, you can do things to stop it. How has youth violence affected your life? What can you do to prevent youth violence? What are the cause of youth violence? I also think that we could also be a part of a group who goes through schools and helps those in need. I also think that we could be a part in someones life that is not going so well. We can do something about youth violence. We can do something about bullying.

Justin Reidhead - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Kanab Middle School - Teacher, Jeanine Johnson

## Youth Violence

There I was sitting in a fourth grade classroom, we had a couple kids that thought they were better than everybody in the school because they were taller, faster, and stronger than the others. The kids who were picked on from the more athletic kids finally had enough of the bullying and they turned on others that were different in minor ways than they were. A boy who had a birth defect was always teased by kids and I couldn't get away from the fact that he was getting taunted for something that he didn't do. I got so fed up about it that I took a stand along with a few other kids to stop the brutal actions. This stand worked for a while until my secret got out, I am color blind. My mom always told me that it was just a type of gene that was passed down by others in my family, but I treated my minor difference like it was the end of the world. I started to be a jerk to a couple of kids, and I started to get a little bit more mad that they were bullying me for something I didn't do. I rarely got bullied physically, but their words stung like sand from a two hundred mile wind sandstorm. I started to turn a little on my friends that weren't trying to help me for fear of being tormented themselves. I had mean remarks thrown at me just because I said something to another kid. I started to hate school so much that I started to consider homeschooling as an option to get away from my problems. I began to think every day about what I could do to stop them, and I realized that I never thought about what the bullies had been through to get like they were. I always thought that they were just kids who didn't have any feelings and so they would go do what they wanted to the smaller kids. I started to learn about bullying from other teachers and the bullies probably were abused, are trying to make themselves look better, or

they were bullied too. I started to try to help them, and after I treated them like actual people they became my friends.

Bullies might have started out like any normal kid like you and I, but they may have not had a home like us. Most of us have a loving mother and father, maybe we live with one parent, or we live with a relative. Some bullies grow up in a home with a family who may not do the best things, and this behavior can rub off on them. All of the emotions of the family member might come out at an unexpected time and they could lash out at other individuals harming them with words or abuse. Another reason bullies could come about is that they could feel left out or think that they are not important in their homes. Bullies don't always come from bad homes, they come from perfectly good homes with parents or guardians that have taught them about how they shouldn't bully or how they need to treat others with respect. They either don't grasp that concept or they just choose to act like jerks because in their mind that might be okay or cool. Everybody has feelings and maybe others are more sensitive to the things other kids might say to them like jokes that others laugh at. You could turn their good happy life upside down into a deep dark despair of memories and tauntings. A lot of times the process of turning a kid into a bully is kind of like a plant life. The nice kid starts getting bullied (seed), the actions happen frequently (sunlight and water), the victim starts to act different and change (watching the plant grow and become bigger, still giving it sunlight and water). After they go through all of the steps they become the new addition to the flower garden.

If you think that a bully can't be changed, think twice. Remember in my story I became friends with the bully, and I didn't even have to be like them. I realized after the change that it didn't just change

them, it changed my perspective on who I could be. We can all take a stand against the actions of another human being. We are all alike in a way, it doesn't matter what gender we are, or what race or color we are. We are all human beings with feelings, and we all deserve to be treated equally, like Martin Luther King Junior and Abe Lincoln said. In the movie "Divergent" the lady who is trying to overrule the system says, "I didn't do this, human nature did this". We need to recognize that it's not some different force making things happen, it's us. We are who controls our lives, no one else can truly control us. They can only try to make us live like they want us to. We think others need help to get away from them, but the bullies need just as much help escaping bullying's sticky trap. Here's something to think about if you don't quite get it, would you want to see another human struggle among nets holding them down or do you want to be the hero who swoops down to free the victim in the tangled mess. You never see superman leave a person in need. We don't want to separate a great bond in a chain of many links, so why would we want to be the people who ruin a life instead of the people who are trying hard to fix it.

Raechel Ward – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kim Irvine

## Subtle

“A word is dead  
When it is said,  
Some say-  
I say it just  
Begins to live  
That day.”

~Emily Dickinson

A quite word, the eyes look away, no one seems to notice. Everyone walks on by, stuck in their own world. But they aren't, not really. Because they notice just like everyone else, the girl who sits alone at the lunch table, the boy walking with his head down in the hall. The friendless. The outcasts. The ones that everyone knows of, but nobody knows.

There are too many types of violence to count. There is physical violence, mental, sexual, and emotional, but the subtlest type of violence is ignorance. Not ignorance where you don't know what's happening, but the ignorance of knowing what is happening and *choosing* to ignore it. Where you see the girl that sits alone, and walk past without even a smile, or a nod. Because if you were to do that, they might think you were being friendly, and they might try to sit with you, or talk to you and that just can't happen because they're *weird*, and nobody *likes* them. *Right?* Wrong. If you were to smile at them or talk to them, then somebody might like them. That somebody could be you.

Violence is caused by the circle of violence. The circle of violence goes something like this. First you must be the victim. You must experience the pain of what it is like to be bullied. And then you must be the bully. This is the part of the circle that makes me wonder if there is any humanity left in the world. Because if you know what it is to go through something like that, why would you wish it on anyone? I'm not sure why, but I know I have been a part of the circle of violence. I have completed it and I am left wondering if I have any humanity left in me. Because I know what it's like to sit alone, watching everyone sneak the glances at me and then turn away as if they saw nothing. I know what it's like when that one person does smile at you. It feels as if they have opened the sun and let it shine down on you after you have been isolated on a frozen island. And I know the sinking black wave of crushed hope as they tell you that they don't like you and the excuses they make up to get away. I have been the victim. But I have also been the bully. I have been the one who looks, and then pretends to see nothing. I have been the one to make up the excuses of needs to be somewhere else. So I wonder just how I was able to do that, when I knew the pain it causes. Because it hurts, and it hurts bad knowing that *nobody* likes you. Nobody wants to be around you, because you're you.

Violence isn't just being the bullied, but being the bully. Because bullies aren't that ones who recovered from the violence, they're the ones who hide their pain with a façade. They take it

out on others because they're secretly screaming for help. Their souls have been left with a ghastly wound, they're hearts may be damaged for good. The bully is also the victim, but some forget to see that. We vilify them, we make them out to be a terrible person. Little do we know that we are hurting them more, and the more we hurt them, the more they will hurt others because we are adding gashes to their souls. No one is born violent, everyone has kindness and good in them. You just need to dig a little deeper to find it in some, because they have buried deep down in their scarred souls so no one can hurt them again.

They tell me I am bad

And I am

They tell me I hurt

And I do

But I don't want to

I am the bully

But I am also

The victim

I can't stop violence. It runs rampant in this world. But I can stop the violence in myself. Or at least I can try. The circle of violence is a vicious whirlpool that sucks you in, and it is a hard thing to get out of. But the one thing I can do is help heal. Because the remedy for violence is healing. I mustn't vilify the victim. I cannot humiliate the hurt.

A smile is all it could take to save someone from their past or present. Emily Dickinson said, "Forever is composed of now's." As soon as you make the decision to heal instead of hurt, you make the decision to leave the circle of violence.

So instead of walking past the girl who sits alone at her table, smile and say hello. When you see that boy walking in the hall, walk next to him and maybe just say his name. Because that's all it takes to let them know they're not alone. That not everybody hates them. And you can start healing the victim before they become the bully. Just start, by saying hello.

"A word is dead

When it is said,

Some say-

I say it just

Begins to live

That day."

~Emily Dickinson

**Sydney Wilkinson – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Union Middle School – Teacher, Christina Van Dam**

There's a certain confidence that all of us possess in the beginning of our life. But some of us are stripped of it because of bullying. Bullying, or youth violence, has greatly impacted our youth and we *all* need to lend a hand to make it stop. I not only know just how much bullying has changed me as a person, but also the causes and how we can prevent it. Let's show the bullies that we are not afraid anymore.

I used to be that girl at school who you always see laughing and just being plain crazy. I was super confident and I honestly didn't care what anyone thought about me. But then I went to my first year of middle school, the year that completely changed how I thought of myself. The first day was great so far and my classes hadn't even started, but when I sat down in math for first period I sat behind a girl who made fun of me for liking what kind of music I liked. It hurt you know? I mean, that's what you'd expect to hear in this kind of situation but you aren't thinking deep enough about what they mean when they say that it hurts. People always worry about the physical side of youth violence like hitting and kicking. But really, it's the words that hurt most. A bruise or cut will heal. A mental scar won't. It'll stick with you for the rest of your life and change who you are- that is if you let it.

Next, in the same math class, I sat next to another girl and it got even worse. I have increased hair on my upper lip and between my eyebrows and I'm not exactly proud of it, and she knew it, like if she had a sixth sense to find out what peoples' weaknesses were. She started teasing me, calling me 'Eyebrows' and saying I had a mustache. Now I know what you're thinking: Just ignore her. I did but she wouldn't stop. Even if I just sat there quietly she would keep calling me names like 'ugly'. One day she was tormenting me when the first girl who bullied me called me an attention seeker. I honestly couldn't take it anymore. I know that might sound dramatic, but I just snapped. This had been going on for months. Endless days upon days of her seeing me in the halls and calling me names. She even made fun of me for having a crush on some guy. She would find out anything she could to have against me and use it. I mean, I know I have flaws. I'm not perfect, but that doesn't mean I enjoy hearing somebody say

it to me. When I got home, I started to believe her insults. I started thinking that I was all alone in this and that nobody really understood nor did they care enough to listen. I started to think of myself as worthless, pathetic and that everyone was just putting up with me and that they actually hated me. Every time I looked in the mirror I couldn't help but think: 'Why should I even be alive? What's the point of getting up everyday just to face this torture?'

Now here we are in the present. The bullying itself has been over for a long time but it's made an imprint in my mind. I'll never forget the girl's harsh words or how lonely I felt ever day I went home. I'm still pretty insecure about myself. I mean, I can't even hang around my friends without comparing myself. It's become a habit and people say I'm beautiful and I should stop thinking of myself in this way but it's a hard habit to break and I just want to say to them, 'You don't understand.' Even now my classmates will tease me about the extra hair and it even hurts when my friends point out some acne on my face. I know they don't mean any harm but it still hurts and it just adds on to this pile of feelings and insecurities that have been building up since day one. Bullies and even just normal people need to realize that we need to do whatever we can to stop this.

I think that every victim including myself, have asked at least once, "What did I do to deserve this?" And there are multiple reasons for that. Maybe the bully grew up in a violent environment and they think it's okay. Or maybe they've felt pain. They want others to feel their pain and they do that through bullying. But some bullies do it simply because amusement. They'll pick the weak ones because they know they can get away with it. We need to make them stop thinking that they can keep doing this and get away with it.

We *can* prevent bullying if we really try. You may think you are powerless against the bully but the truth is there is so much you can do. Start an anti-bullying club, stand up to a bully if you see them picking on someone. But the most helpful thing you can do really, is pick somebody up if they've fallen. They may not be showing that they need it but on the inside they

might be feeling horrible and you can help. All you need to do is walk over and introduce yourself. Let them know that you are there for them when they really need it.

So now do you see? Bullying is more than just something bad in the world and we need to stop it. Now that you know the causes of bullying and how you can prevent it, go out there and take action! Don't just stare at that kid against the wall, invite them to join you! Whatever happened to the golden rule? "Do unto others what you would have done unto you."

*Utah Board of Juvenile Justice*

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**PAT BERCKMAN**

Director  
SL County Division of Youth Services  
Salt Lake City

**CHRISTOPHER CROWDER**

Community/Faith-Based Representative  
Layton City

**MATHEW DAVIES**

Community/Mental Health Representative  
Salt Lake City

**PATRICK GARCIA**

Associate Superintendent  
Salt Lake City School District  
Salt Lake City

**GINI HIGHFIELD**

Second District Juvenile Court  
Farmington

**SCOTT JACKSON**

Law Enforcement  
Moab

**ANTHONY JOHNSON**

Community Representative  
Ogden

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Salt Lake City

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West Jordan

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Third District Juvenile Court  
Salt Lake City

**VAN NGUYEN**

Youth Member  
Salt Lake City

**BRENT PLATT**

Director  
Division of Child & Family Services  
Salt Lake City

**TROY RAWLINGS**

Davis County Attorney  
Farmington

**SHIRLEE SILVERSMITH**

Director of Indian Affairs, Utah  
Salt Lake City

**RACHAEL SKIDMORE**

Youth Co-Chair  
Bountiful

**PAMELA L. VICKREY**

Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys, LLC  
Salt Lake City

**DEBBIE WHITLOCK**

Deputy Director  
Division of Juvenile Justice Services  
Salt Lake City

Staff

---

**CUONG NGUYEN**

Juvenile Justice Specialist  
CCJJ

**Antonette GRAY**

DMC Coordinator, UBJJ

**JO LYNN KRUSE**

Administrative Assistant, CCJJ



Utah Commission  
on Criminal and  
Juvenile Justice

Utah State Capitol Complex  
Senate Building, Suite 330  
PO Box 142330  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2330  
(801) 538-1031 • Fax: (801) 538-1024  
[WWW.JUVENILE.UTAH.GOV](http://WWW.JUVENILE.UTAH.GOV)