

2016

Utah's Challenge to Do the Write Thing
Student Writings

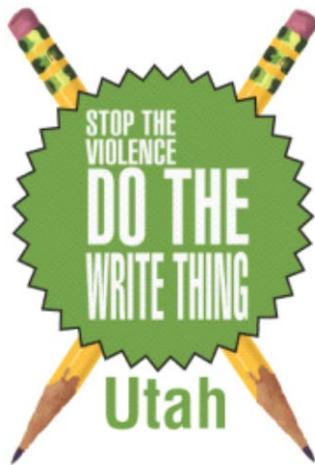


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Do the Write Thing 2016 VIP Judges

Krissia Beatty
Miss Utah 2015

Mike Brown, *Interim Chief*
Salt Lake City Police Department

Susan Burke, *Director*
Utah 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

Rep. Eric K. Hutchings
Utah House of Representatives

Judge Renee Jimenez
Third District Juvenile Court

Mayor Ben McAdams
Salt Lake County

Jason Nguyen, Reporter
ABC4 News

Derek Parra
Olympic Medalist

Kathy Younker
Wheeler Foundation

Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee

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

UTAH'S SIXTEENTH 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 Committee. The Board monitors Utah's compliance with the core protections afforded in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) as reauthorized in 2002. The Board is also responsible for administering federal funds appropriated through the JJDP A 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, middle school principals, and teachers encouraging them to involve their 7th and 8th grade students in the Challenge. Suggestions 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 nearly 2,500 students participated in classroom discussions about youth violence and over 1000 chose to submit writings for review. Students from the University of Utah and Weber State University participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top ninety writings. The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice then selected the top twelve finalists, whose work was forwarded to Utah's VIP Judges for scoring. The VIP Judges had the difficult task of selecting a boy and a 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

University of Utah

Weber State University

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

National Finalists

Carter Piggott

*8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Mike Farnsworth*

Kylee Vandecar

*7th Grade, Draper Park Middle School
Teacher, Kimberly Carter*

Carter Piggott - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Mike Farnsworth



Bullying is the cheese in the mouse trap. It leads the victim to its death. A study by Yale University states that people who are bullied are 7 to 9% more likely to consider suicide. Bullying is a big problem that creates stress and pain in people's lives that can last for years. What is bullying though? I classify it into three different categories: The first two are Physical bullying and Mental bullying. Physical bullying is when it is active, such as shoving, punching, or kicking. Mental bullying is attacking verbally, like name calling. The third category is one that no one really knows about. I have experienced it and it is horrible once you figure it out. I call it the unknown. It is when you are being bullied but do not know it. It usually happens when someone can not recognize facial and conversation cues or you. You think the bullies were friendly until the smudged window is raised and you see the truth of what really happened.

I was diagnosed with Asperger's, a high functioning form of Autism, around age 5. I don't recognize usually when people are insincere or sarcastic. And I have a hard time understanding when I am bugging people. In 4th grade I established friends, friends that would talk with me and laugh with me. I thought the teacher was nice too. My friends and I would play four square a lot until they started cheating so I wouldn't win. They called me gay, I told them I am happy because I thought gay meant happy still. When I talked about my favorite toy Lincoln Logs they would laugh and have me keep talking about them. They told the teacher that I was talking about poo, and being disgusting. She would get annoyed with me, but I couldn't understand what was happening. They would continue to lead me on and encouraged me to talk about my Lincoln Logs and what I would build with them. One time this guy knocked his elbow on my water cup so it got on me a little. They laughed. I hated that so I dumped the rest (The cup was like an inch tall) on him. I got in trouble and felt bad about it. I finished that year and began my first baseball season. My parents wanted to get me into a team sport. It was fun but I kept getting called gay for some reason so I replied, "yes I am happy". I knew what gay meant by then but I wanted to deflect the insult on them. During games they spat sunflower seeds. I told them to stop but they didn't. We would run around the field for training as they called me gay. I didn't really like baseball that much after that.

The truth was I was fighting a war I didn't know I was in. They were jerks, so was the teacher, they were all bullies. I stood up for myself because they were laughing, and when the teacher asked about it, the only people they could ask what happened to were the people who hated me. I was told by the teacher to try to stop it. Baseball season was the same too, the bullies proclaiming my nickname I didn't want, like it was front page news. "Gay."

Why, why would they destroy someone? Was it really that fun? To so many people in the world there is an equation that creates a "Safety" from the odd. Different = Bad. When people are of a different religion, race, even cultures, we often view them as wrong, or bad. I am unique, extravagant, and happy. I'm not the cookie-cutter mold of boys, I've never really liked sports or videogames, so then the equation started up. Different = Bad. People didn't know how to categorize me or relate to me, so they put up their safe castle walls and fired everything at me. But what hurts the most are the people who didn't help me or stand up to the bullies, but

instead walked away or ignored what was happening. Well guess what guys, just because something is different does not make it scum, and the word "gay" is not a pejorative..

So why does no one really go to anyone to talk about what is happening? Because bullies point out every flaw of yours and make you believe in flaws you didn't even know you had. With all of this embarrassment and shame, how can you talk to someone you respect when your greatest fear is that they will think of you and see you the same way that the bully sees you? And if so many people are silent when someone is being bullied, how can I trust who will really stand up with me? Bully Hotline, therapists, and even the word bully are objects of humor in school. Friends mess with each other saying "Oh, you're being a bully, I need Bully Hotline." Then they laugh and laugh. You don't want to be part of a joke. And you don't want anyone to think of your pain as though you are just being "sensitive" or "making a big deal out of nothing". And so you go on day after day with this being your life.

Another reason you can't go to a counselor is because the bullies know you're going when you have to leave for the counselors in the middle of class. You get a reputation as being that kid that has to see a counselor. It just gives the bullies more ammunition. The same with a support group, you don't want to be the weird kid who is getting bullied and can't handle it. Bullying is hidden. The bullies attack and the victims walk on eggshells with no one knowing. What do we do to solve it? Create something anonymous so that people can say who is bullying and when and where it is happening; such as an email that is linked to the school web address where kids can write what is going on with them in certain situations during school that is causing them deep stress and anxiety. Teach the kids who aren't being bullied but who see things happening everyday, to learn to stand up, or feel like they can report the problem without being dismissed or feel like they are tattling. There are too many good kids that just don't know what to do in a situation where they feel uncertain on how they should handle it. They don't know what to say. They don't want to be made fun of either. So they stay silent. It would be great if kids felt empowered and given tools to know what to say and to do in those situations. These are just some of the thoughts I have. I think the thing that will stop the bullies the most, is if the everyday people who aren't being bullied, would stand up and say "stop". This is the way every civil rights and every injustice has been fought; by people who are not being personally affected, but start to become aware of the circumstances around them, and start to stand up for those that are being excluded. When we just say it doesn't affect me, I don't want to get involved, then we are giving all the power to the bullies. It takes people choosing to be affected and taking a stand, in order to make this world a better place. More kids need to feel like they can do this and that they can be aware of what is happening in their school and their own classrooms and hallways, and that they can make so many other people's lives better by no longer tolerating this kind of cruelty in life.

It might just work.

Kylee Vandecar - 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Kimberly Carter



Violence is the Problem, Not the Solution

Violence is the act of lashing out at someone to bring them down during your times of pain. Violence often sounds like silence because when it really hits in the right spot it feels unreal, like it's impossible to comprehend that a certain person could cause so much pain and surprise. But what really hurts the most is the feeling. Violence feels like your whole world is falling apart and there's nothing left to put it back together. Like there is so much going on and it can be unbearable at times. It feels like you have the biggest lump in your throat and your heart drops like it did when you were a kid and you knew you broke the rules and hurt someone along with it. Many types of violence affect young people, but some hurt more than others. Violence isn't worth it. "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind."- Mahatma Gandhi

Youth violence affects everyone, but I am closer to it than most. I grew up with three older brothers who all got involved in illegal drugs and alcohol before I was capable of understanding what that was. It all started with my oldest brother. He got involved in drugs and alcohol and it went like dominos after that. My other two brothers went down the same path as him. Over time, my brothers became addicted and couldn't stop. We constantly sent them to rehab places, where they seemed to get better only to droop down again as soon as they returned home. It looked as if it couldn't get any worse, but this wasn't true. Soon after my closest brother got home from his 6 month stay at a youth facility he acted out. He was angry at my other brother for upsetting him and

began a physical fight. They had sharp weapons in hand and were impossible to pull off each other. It was an extremely scary and violent time for me as I stared at my brothers, not believing a thing I saw. I couldn't imagine how two loving and kind people could be so violent. They got sent away again, and again after this. Times like these were repeated between them and some even ended with the cops searching rooms for drugs and other illegal items, and taking my brothers away in handcuffs. Youth violence shouldn't be downplayed, because if not stopped it could hurt someone or even cost someone's life.

I believe there are reasons why youth get involved in fights like these. For my brothers, they got involved because of the illegal drugs running their systems along with their issues such as bipolar depression, medication refusal, and OCD. Many people get involved in youth violence because they are jealous and envious of one another, or they think badly of themselves. This causes them to steal things from others and push others down to bring themselves up. Even though there are more than many causes of youth violence, there are even more ways to reduce or even eliminate youth violence.

There is a part for everyone to play in helping reduce violence. While I still love all my brothers dearly, I don't believe they will ever stop using drugs and other illegal items without a little push of help. I think there are many ways our community and schools could help, beginning with creating support groups and making each person aware that they aren't alone and indeed CAN talk to someone for help and support. Parents and

families can make them feel heard, loved, and understood. They need to know that they are loved and someone out there cares for them, because someone does. Many problems with youth violence begins with miscommunication. If everyone is treated equally and doesn't look down on other people we can unite to make a happy, violence free community. I can help prevent violence as an individual by spreading the word on social media and being more kind and loving to everyone. Creating tips and informative posts will help people become more aware of youth violence, while still letting them know that I am here for them to give advice and listen without judgement. It can be a safe, and non hateful network where people can share their feelings with one another and ask for solutions or even just someone to talk to. People spreading violent comments can gain the knowledge of anti-violence, and hopefully be stopped. We can spread love not hate, and happiness not cruelty. I know that through my experience of violence, that no one should ever have to feel that way.

Violence is a very hurtful and scaring physical action intended to hurt others. We are all affected by this individually, whether it is indirectly or directly. Our families, communities, and schools are also affected by it, through bullying, abuse, peer pressure and more, but there are so many things we can do to avoid and reduce it. We need to use our voices to stand up against youth violence. We are all unique, and loved by someone out there, and we should all be given a chance to speak our minds and listen to what others have to say. I can help by spreading the anti-violence message and bringing awareness and love to those who need it. The world would be a better place

full of loving and happy families, friends, and united citizens if we all help those struggling to feel loved and understood, and give them alternative options as opposed to violence. We've all seen it happen, now let's all see it stop. As a wise man once said, "Violence is the problem, not the solution".

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Runners Up

Kimball Call

8th Grade, Butler Middle School
Teacher, Maria Powers

Brooklyn Rapp

8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Kristy Searle

Kimball Call - 8th Grade
Butler Middle School - Teacher, Maria Powers



Violence can be defined as behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. (Dictionary.com) The keyword in this definition is physical. Does behavior have to be physical to hurt someone? Throughout my life I have been on the receiving end of both kinds of violence. In second grade, a group of kids my own age saw my insecurity in a new school. Although I made good friends quickly I still hadn't completely settled down yet. Those kids began making rude comments about my tall and uncoordinated figure, which it was at the time. They continued to harass me in the form of sniggers, cruel whisperings, and the feeling that they thought I was stupid and wasn't good enough for their company, not that I wanted it, but as they continued their behavior, the feelings sank deep into my mind, and I began to think that other people, even my best friends, saw me this way too. Even in second grade, I was hurt, and damaged by their behavior. Is this violence?

It would not be until fifth grade before these kinds of kids returned. This time it was all the same thing. Rude comments, treating me like an idiot, cruel talk behind my back. My morale began to sink again. I can see, in perfect clarity, like watching a black and white program in high definition, the scene of a basement art classroom. There was a substitute that day, and we were sitting around three large tables in quiet murmuring while we completed our assignment. The boy sitting next to me made a sudden movement. He straightened up, turned and looked at me, and said it straight to my face. He told me, he didn't ask me, but told me my family was poor. I recall feeling like he had kicked me hard in the shins. He continued, telling me I was poor, ugly, stupid and came from a wreck of a family. This was definitely not true, at least the last part, my family was awesome. I wasn't quite sure if we were poor, but even if we were how would he know. I felt a bit of bravery coming on now, I looked at him and valiantly denied those facts, but he plowed on, repeating what he had said before, despite my protests, he turned to the other kids at our table, and started using words I didn't understand at the time. I felt anger boiling in me, I looked at him in the eyes and told him to shut up. He blinked, obviously amused, he told me to say it again. I locked eyes with him, and loudly began to pronounce the words I hoped would indeed get him to shut up, but before I had finished, he punched me hard across the face, I fell out of my chair and hit the ground hard. My jaw felt numb and my eyes began to sting as the impact had grazed my nose. I looked up, and he was staring at me, brutal and victorious.

The bruise faded in a few days, and the pain was gone in minutes. I was never happy inside that school ever again, because what that kid did to me had shattered something inside me. My grades faltered, and my happiness drooped. Later that year rumors would fly that I was, well, it made things far worse. Those kids that spread rumors, that harassed my appearance, that hated me for being myself, made life in that school hell.

I don't know what made those kids do it, but I am not about to start listing off the reasons that most people think cause youth violence. Who can say if those kids came from broken homes in the hoods of Cleveland? They might just have come from the wealthiest parts of San Diego. They might even be reasonably well off kids with nice, respectable families, like we often see here in Utah. I have known enough kids to understand that bullies come from everywhere, places you might least expect. Those

kids made the decision to do that to me, nobody forced them. They made a choice. But I think we can trace the source of the violence they exercised on me back to the adults in their lives. You asked me what I think the source of youth violence is, and I am sitting here, writing for you, what I want you to know. Violence is not what it used to be. There is no more of the slamming up against lockers, stealing lunch money, and firing spitballs like there used to be. The world has changed. What happened to me is some of the most common ways students see violence today, and I am not talking about the punch. What the kid said to me, in my face, with so much lethality and vulgarity is what made me so unhappy. That hurts, that damages, that kills, to have that done to you when you're so young.

I am confused why you ask us to explain how we, students, are responsible to rise up against youth violence when the course of action that needs to be taken to completely obliterate this problem is a cooperative effort from everyone against it. This isn't about adults telling kids to be independent and strong. This needs to be about telling everyone to shut up and be better. What if telling the collective community to be independent and strong makes the sources of violence feel more boxed in a cut off. I don't think these kids came to school one day and felt like shoving and punching other kids. I think they must have seen or experienced it from somewhere else. Adults seem to forget that they are the source of all of the youth violence in this world. It slips their minds that children will learn what violence is and its consequences from an adult. Remember, I am a victim of the violence that some adult somewhere sparked in the mind of an innocent human being.

It starts and ends within the walls of our own home. It all comes down to the basic principles we all learned in kindergarten. "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all," and "sharing is caring" and simple things like that which we fail to recognize in adulthood and as teenagers. These can stop violence, and unless we see that, and make that manifest, then we won't. Violence isn't always physical, and it isn't at all a child's fault to be taught violence, we have to weed out the roots of violence for it to be destroyed, or we will keep harming children, damaging innocent minds, and killing each other. It's the greatest human weakness.

Brooklyn Rapp – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Kristy Searle



The boy who is made fun of for his tattered up clothing is using all of the money he can earn and gather to go towards his mother's medical bills. That one girl who is shoved around for being smaller than everyone else was born with a disease that stops her growth and development earlier than the average person. And the teenage girl who's called horrible names for her dark pigment was in an orphanage most of her life because her parents were too poor to make a living for her. The list of possible scenarios of the kids who stick out at school and get picked on could go on and on! The lesson and point I'm trying to make is that many kids get attacked daily for things that they have no control over, or they get abused in any way for the way they look. This represents youth violence.

But allow me to back up a little bit. What exactly is youth violence? Well, the dictionary definition is, "harmful behaviors that can start early and continue into young adulthood." In my own words and opinion, youth violence is when a child or teenager (minor) is harmed in any shape or form.

One of the main causes of youth violence is bullying. Of course, there's many other reasons of what causes it. But in my opinion, bullying is the number one motive.

Everyone knows what bullying is, so I'm not going to get into the definitions and all of that. But bullying is talked about and mentioned a lot because it's a huge deal! It affects lives and takes them away. Some things that can cause and trigger kids to turn on others could be to boost their own self-esteem, to fit in with others, to be "cool", events that happen at home, the list goes on and on. And this is a cause of youth violence because the actual *youth* is targeting and being targetted by the *youth!*

I don't know about you, but youth violence has affected me many times in many different cases. And it's not fun! I was affected by youth violence because I was cyberbullied. It happened last year, and it lasted for a few weeks. An unknown person made a fake Instagram account that was very hateful towards me. They posted rude things and made offensive comments about me. I received threatening messages that lowered my self esteem. I felt attacked and vulnerable. I had no clue what to do or who to turn to because I felt like it was my fault that they had something against me! I've been through a lot of tough times throughout my life that involves youth violence, but I won't go into detail about every little scenario. But I decided to share this one because it supports my reasoning when I say that bullying is the number one cause of youth violence. It affected me, and it probably affected the person behind the account! It made me feel worthless and useless, and it probably made them feel horrible once they realized what they did.

So why exactly am I writing this paper? Is it to lecture you about my personal experiences? Is it just because I'm bored? Of course not! I'm writing this paper because I want to go over some ways that we can all do to prevent youth violence! It's way too common and it upsets way too many kids. But talking about it isn't going to fix it or go away. I've done a lot of thinking, and I've taken a lot of notes on some solutions that anyone could do or use to avoid and prevent this. I came up with a lot of things, but the most powerful one that stood out to me, was to use our voice. A lot of people have no clue what their one voice can do in this world.

We can use our voice to prevent youth violence in many ways. We can speak up and give someone a self-esteem booster by giving them a compliment. No one but that specific person can know what they're going through. So if you see someone that's down, use your voice and throw out a sweet comment!

Another way we can use our voice to avoid this is to listen and understand. Now, now, now. I know that listening is using our ears, but understanding can use our brain, heart, and voice. If someone opens up to you and tells you that they are being affected by youth violence or is affecting others, the most important thing you can do is understand. Your voice could soothe and calm someone down! Your one voice could encourage them to go to a trusted adult. Especially if they trust you. Put yourself in their shoes and understand how they feel. I can't even start to list the many things your voice could affect someone in such a positive way.

The last solution that involves our voice is to be heard. Make your voice be heard. Even if you have the quietest voice, it could be the loudest if you just believe in it and make it the loudest! Communication is the key. It's very important! I'm not saying that you should go yell at people to quit causing youth violence. But if you're being targeted by someone, stick up for yourself! Tell them that nothing they say or do can hurt you. Maybe you could even try talking the situation out with them! If only you could hear my voice. Then you would understand what I mean!

There's so many ways our voice could make a difference, but I can't explain them all. But I think it's important that we all spread awareness to this cause, and realize that youth violence is an important matter! And we should all try using our voice to prevent it from hurting anyone else.

The youth is the future. We need to protect and look out for every single minor because each and every one of us deserves a happy and youth violence free life.

My motto is: LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD. And with that being said: SPREAD POSITIVITY. LISTEN. UNDERSTAND. MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, MAKE SOME NOISE!

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing



State Finalists

Jade Bartnicki

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Kristy Searle**

Kianna Bengé

**8th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda Lujan**

Jaron Bunker

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Brandee Bergum**

Thomas Davies

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberly Irvine**

Aspyn Jones

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberly Irvine**

Lara Mijic

**8th Grade, Butler Middle School
Teacher, Maria Powers**

Aidan Nielsen

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberly Irvine**

Douglas Williams

**8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberly Irvine**

Jade Bartnicki - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Kristy Searle



“Words Will Never Hurt Me”

“Stick and stones may break my bones,
But words will never hurt me.”
This is what they say,
They all think it’s true.
But I don’t think that’s very fair,
I don’t agree, do you?

Sticks and stones do break my bones,
But the words I hear are the hurtful ones.
The things they say, the way they speak,
Those are the things that make me weak.
The daggers in their conversation,
From those there’s no escape, no vacation.

The verbal abuse is attacking the youth,
It’s causing them pain, it’s sad, but the truth.
And I am a victim of this violent charge,
Sadly this issue is one that affects groups at large.
The new kids, the dumb kids, the ones who are small,
Any flaw that they find is what starts it all.

Sometimes they’re jealous, sometimes they’re just mean,
Sometimes it’s adults, maybe just kids, or teens.
Maybe they’re being bullied by others,
Maybe their fathers, maybe their mothers,
Whatever the cause, it’s just not fair
For violence to occur, for us to fall into the snare.

So, here I stand, afraid and silent
All the while they get more violent.
When it started, the words were meager,
But as time passed, they got more eager
To destroy, and put me down
They consume me, I am left to drown.

The sea of lies, the waves of disgrace
They follow me, haunt me, it’s me that they chase.
The barbaric thoughts they put into my mind,
Leave me in the dust, they leave me behind.
I’m the outcast, abandoned, alone in this world,
For who would love a mistreated girl?

I have none to call my friend, no one to turn to,
I don't have a loving family, good parents like you do.
When I'm home, if my parents are there,
I am abused, beaten, because they simply don't care.
Their fists and strength, their sticks and stones,
They make their mark on me, they *do* break my bones.

And when they're gone the noises return,
The words that wound, the words that burn.
They beat me, peck me, hold me back,
They never cut me any slack.
No one ever cares to ask,
I'm just their target, their goal, their task.

Their go-to girl, the one to blame,
The one to hate, to call her names.
I never show, but deep inside,
I can't take anymore, it gets too hard to hide
I want to break, to crumble and fall,
It's getting too hard to stand up tall.

Too hard to allow the words in my head,
Too hard to let them push me 'til I'm dead.
I can't take anymore! I just can't hold back!
These words, and the pain, I'm under attack!
Enough is enough, it's time for this to end.
I'm done with the violence, I just need a friend.

Broken bones from sticks and stones, but words still can not hurt me.
Although it rhymes, too many times, this statement has often failed me.
The broken bones, well they can heal,
But words cut like knives, and that torment is too real.
Damaged feelings? The heart, soul, and mind?
Those can't be fixed, there's too many memories you can't rewind.

The scars left on the inside, the bruises and cuts,
Are all the lies, the "ifs", "thens" and "buts".
The times you insulted me, the times you were mean,
The words you said I took seriously, you see hate never comes clean.
Those memories I can't erase, those crimes I can't forgive,
I have seen too much, heard too much, but now's my time to live.

My time to stand up, to finally speak,
To proclaim to the world, I am no longer weak.
The time is now for me to say,
That words *do* hurt, they wear us away.
But now I share my message, I hope that it is clear,
That words can cause harm to anyone who hears.

My challenge to you is to watch what you claim,
For once it is said, only you are to blame.
Be kind in your words, be smart, be aware,
For it's very important to show that we care.
Times are rough, and words can be too,
So be careful what you express about me, about you.

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can also hurt me.

Kianna Bengé - 8th Grade
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda Lujan



Contemporarily Clairvoyant

Youth violence

A threatening matter to handle, it is
The whispered lie from phony friends
The judgement that our disputes have tread
And the unnerving cruelty that never ends.

But why is it dominating us?
It burns in the tears of the acquitted
Carving deep mentally and physically
Scarring not only self esteem
But the skins of the ones fighting
And the personality they seem to have lost.

The past
Imagining ourselves
Raising our hopeful fists towards the heavens
The vision to be united as a community
A supporting family
Divorced in the bends of reality
Where verdict and hatred tower over the love
Where punches, cuts and bruises aren't enough
Where children are shot at and beaten
In this defective utopia
As angels of hope become frightening demons
And the dreams of equality become nightmares
That was once a cherished reverie.

We need to be the friend
For the lonely girl in the hall
The shoulder to cry on
For the child mourning his parents' death
The helping hand for the people in war
And the spark of hope for the people without it.
The roar of the uprisings
Deducing what's right and what's not
Mutilating the present
And the lives of innocent children.
Our future
Struggling on a hospital bed
At war with ourselves
And resting defeated in a coffin
Can be prevented
No more homicides
No more suicides
No more bullying
No more fighting
No more scars
No more labels
We must stop the weight weakness
The sexuality shunning
The racial rudeness
And replace it with caring compliments

Lovely laughter
And favorable friendliness
For the minors who have been hurt
And for the new society we will create
We can become the paradise
We once fantasized of
With the hope in our hearts and the kindness we can give
To be a better person tomorrow
Than we were today
We create friendships together
Rather than run from the bombs of oppression alone
We will shape the world our kids would want to live in
Without tyranny and fear
And forgive those around us
To stop the violence
That will one day
Be overcome with generosity
And we can sleep safely and soundly
Knowing that we made the world a better place.

Jaron Bunker - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Brandee Bergum



Youth Violence

What is youth violence? That is the main problem in schools, homes, and even hanging out with “friends”. Youth violence is a big problem not just in one state, not just in the U.S., but all over the world. Kids today and tomorrow are getting picked on, teased, and bullied. And yet we think that there is nothing we can do about it. Youth violence is caused by many things such as, not meeting people's expectations, bullies, family problems, and so on. Youth violence causes many deaths and we are just starting to notice. Youth violence can cause scars on kids that may never heal. Kids can go for ever not telling someone that they are being picked on, but if they do not tell someone we can lose a friend, family member, and student. I do not think that youth violence is only physical, I think that it can be emotional and mental. If someone says something like, “you’re gay”, “loser”, and so on it affects them mentally and emotionally. In many shows kids are being picked on and they do nothing about it but shrug it off. Eventually those feelings are going to come back and they will just pile up, until you can’t take them anymore and you feel sick to your stomach, so you decide the world would be better without you. I do think that youth violence is a big contributor of suicides and if we can stop youth violence than we can stop a lot of suicides. Youth violence can lead to many things people don’t even think about, like suicide, drugs, abusive lives, etc. Youth violence is a matter we as a community, nation, and world need to takes seriously. If everyone stopped to think about the effects of youth violence, than it would make a big difference. I think that youth violence is a big problem between families, friends, and students. It need to be stopped and fast before we lose a friend, family member, and student. This essay will tell you how youth violence affects someone, and how we can solve the issue we are all faced with today.

I think that a lot of kids all over the world are being affected by youth violence. I think that I could be classified as a victim of youth violence. I has been pushed around, called names, beaten up, and had rumors put out about me. I came home one day and went to hang out with my “friends”. Next thing I knew they were calling me gay and punching me. I didn’t have the guts to tell someone because I thought I would get in trouble. I just let it keep happening. One day, one of my good friends saw it and stopped it. I was on the verge of thinking I shouldn’t be here. My friends and family brought me back. It is not funny to see someone being picked on. Since that day I feel nervous about who my friends are and what they will do to me. People don't think about it but even if they are just messing around with someone it could affect them dramatically. People used to say the “sticks and stones” poem around me. It made me feel bad because words can and will hurt someone. I used to be called fat, slow, gay, and so on.

Then I started to exercise dramatically, and changed how I looked. Everything changed and so did I. I wasn't who I wanted to be, but other people were happy. So I decided to stay that way for a while. Youth violence is not something to say "brush it off" or "get over it" about. You need to be delicate about addressing it. The biggest concern for me even now is choosing the right friends, to know that they won't hurt me and I can trust them.

I think the biggest solution to youth violence is just being friends. You may not like how someone dresses, acts, looks, etc, but you can always be a friend. I had just moved into a new school, and you know how it is being the new kid, but automatically I had lots of friends. Another good way to stop it is to be kind to everyone you meet. I was raised in a mormon family, so that taught me not to judge. Judging someone is not nice. I think that you don't know what is going on in their lives so you have no right to judge them. My school has something called a "hope squad" and it is where they talk about people who have been feeling down and they help them to feel better about themselves. I think that if every school had one of these it would make more people feel good about themselves and there would probably be less suicides. Stopping youth violence at home begins with the victim. They need to stand up for themselves and tell someone that they are being hurt. I think a saying like "a smile a day keeps the bad feeling away" would be good. It would encourage kids to smile at some kids who don't think anyone likes them. I think that there are a lot of solutions to youth violence, I may have thought of a couple today but if you think, if every kid in the world thinks of a couple solutions to youth violence, we could be overwhelmed by all the ideas. Sometimes kids have the greatest ideas and solutions to problems. Just think about all the millions of young minds out there with all the solutions. We can't overthink something, but we can't underthink something. We need to hit the nail right on the top so we can drive the ideas in schools, homes, stores, and even churches. I think that we can stop youth violence if we put our heads together and think as a team. Thank you for reading my essay, I hoped you liked it.

Thomas Davies - 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kimberly Irvine



Cruelty

The pain shot through my shoulder. It felt as though my arm was lying in a pit of burning coals. Another pain, unlike my shoulder, but just as tremendous engulfed my heart. I was filled with a surge of anger, adrenaline, and a sense of defiance as i became more aware of everything around me. I burst from the cold wet ground as rage filled my soul with warmth. they were coming back around, the people whose perpetual goal was to make my life as miserable as they could, for the sake of recreation. Everything around me seemed to go in slow motion, my aggressors moving towards me as nothing more than blurs from a ghostly, old, photograph. These people were targeting me and my brother. As the blurs approached I realized that they were not aiming for me, they were aiming to take down my brother in the same manner that they had to me only moments before. Now they had gone too far. My spite filled intentions lurched to life as my opponents ran past me. I pulled my arm back, with a clenched fist, and launched it into the back of my adversary. This action sent a rush of victory and sick pleasure through my veins like a winter's river melting from the warmth of the sun. This sadistic way of thinking was soon replaced with a very subtle feeling of guilt at the pain I had probably caused.

None of the hundreds of people around us, probably just having an average day in the school hallways, had noticed my encounter, or they had paid little attention to it. I am not sure why people like to victimize other people, but it happened to me and my brother, and has happened to millions of other people in the world, and it is proof of the type of people that you can come across. As these people attacked me and my brother, by physically tackling me to the ground, I was filled with fury, against the people who were hurting us, and the people who let them. My way of thinking quickly turned me from the aggressed into the aggressor. When i think about it all cases are different from each other, but they all share one common trait. Violence. This is an example of youth violence that has affected me.

Bullies are communists, dictating their people, always seeking power, always seeking confrontation. They laugh when hopelessness burns in their victim's eyes. They mock and torture till someone snaps, or just can't go on. Once they are satisfied, they will find another uncorrupted soul and they will desecrate it. Violence against youth is not a new thing, it has simply evolved. The utter disrespect for a youth's well being is unacceptable, but sadly it happens every second of every day. People who think they are better than those who are different or even those who have "a better life" than them, are promoters of youth violence, and the media makes this even more common with; blackmail, assault, and embarrassment.

Sadly we live in a world where people are more untrustworthy than ever, and if they get a hold of something that could potentially give them power over you than they will utilize it and abuse it. We can help prevent this. If we ever witness youth violence, or any violence at all, tell the proper authorities. Alerting parents and teachers is something I would definitely do, even if it does very little to help. Teachers and parents have the ability to give children some of the help they need. Parents can comfort the child when all others have abandoned them. teachers can provide *some* protection from their peers and attackers. Stuff can get out of hand. When this happens, members of the law must be alerted. Another way that some cases of youth violence could be at least decreased, would be to enforce more strict rules, if people are really this concerned about this terrible epidemic, than it sickens me that some people can go day by day feeling good about themselves after they have made a soul want to kill themselves or others. A lot of times people

can be the cruelest of the cruel to someone, and be able to walk away from authority with barely a scratch. This could cause more youth violence, if they see that they can get away with it. If superiors are even hinted to an act of violence, then they should investigate.

I have been in the hallways at school and have watched people do horrific things to other people, and i have kept walking, not even checking back to even see if the person was ok. Most, if not all people, think of themselves as the hero of their lives, thinking that they are doing good with everything they do, whether to impress their obsequious "friends," or because they think they are funny, but could they be hurting someone? Some people willingly and deliberately hurt people and bring them down out of hatred. i've had enough of these people in my life that i can personally say that i have learned to do my best and ignore them, always being open to them, because when they get a reaction, it lets them know that they have hit something, and that gives them power. As i walk through the hallways at school, insults and other spiteful comments are all too common, as if manners and kindness are nonexistent. The world we live in is cruel, sometimes evil, and it is full of people who will try their hardest to make you hate your own existence. "If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, than walk, if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving." -Martin Luther King Jr.

Aspyn Jones – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kimberly Irvine

Bullied.

The dead autumn leaves
fell off the trees
like forgotten promises
falling from heaven,
unsure
and slow.
The cement hard and firm,
yet feeling like an endless hole
underneath me,
falling,
sending my stomach
three stories too high.
The stone wall no longer feeling like it's supporting the school,
but me.
“She's coming to beat you up,” I hear,
“run.”
My mouth suddenly feeling like a lemon had exploded,
sour and unforgiving.
Everything spun like teacup rides going too fast,
yet I stayed.
I wouldn't let her bring me down so easily.

It felt like years,
growing longer and longer as I waited.
Then, the eye of the hurricane arrived.
Restrained
by her friends
like a lion stuck behind frantic trainers,
doing all they could to keep the beast at bay.
She roared
and growled,
but I wasn't about to be scared off,
so I stayed.

Her words tore at me like termites finishing a log.

Slowly,
but taking away something important.
Things like my self image
and self confidence
turned into faded paint in the back of my mind,
decaying
and chipping away.

Youth violence is becoming more and more of a problem across the nation. More kids taking their life and being depressed than we've ever had. When most people hear the words suicide, grief, or depression, they put their heads down. It's like trying to climb a hill with fifty pound weights strapped to your back. It's a heavy subject, and that's why we need to talk more about it.

You may ask yourself, "What is youth violence?" Well, to me, youth violence is hurting youth in any way, both verbally and physically. Thousands of children every day are bullied, abused, and hazed, and we need to end this growing problem.

"I'm only teasing you!" She says
"It still hurts" He retorts
She tried to erase the past,
But it was written in ink.
So it only smudged and got worse.

"I didn't mean to hit you that hard!" He says
"Now I have a bruise" She calls.
He tried to erase the past,
But it was written in ink.
So it only smudged and got worse.

Youth violence is caused by several things, the biggest being things like life at home, media, or being bullied. Sometimes, bullying is contagious. Not like something you get from being around people like you can with the flu, but the kind of contagious like "Maybe if I do it, they'll see me like them and stop doing it to me," In the words of Zack W. Van, "Bullying builds character like nuclear waste creates superheroes. It's a rare occurrence and often does much more damage than endowment."

Imagine anyone who has been bullied covered in chalk. Each time they're bullied, the chalk leaves a mark exactly where they were. The classrooms, hallways, even school buses would be a

battleground of colors, like a paintball war of chalk had been released at the school, leaving janitors at the school for hours to clean it all up, just for it to be just as bad the next day.

Kids marching in like soldiers traumatized from battles
Continuing to fight because nobody will make the war stop,
Told to tell their commanders,
Yet they don't understand,
Saying things like
"It's only a bruise," or
"Man up"
It makes the soldier feel weak,
Only makes the situation worse,
Like planting a grenade in the tank of self worth and watching it explode into nothingness.
It's a neverending war between the enemy and the soldier,
Yet the real war goes on inside his head.

As teens, most kids think that because they're still so young, they can't do anything about it. So what can you do? The next time someone is bullied, tell someone. They might not do much, but it's better than just watching it continue. If nobody is around, step in yourself. Say something, make it a big deal, because to most passersby, it isn't. Doing nothing makes you worse than the bully, and I can say that confidently. How? Well, first off, you're showing you don't care. Even something like going up to them after and saying something like "I'm sorry that happened," can help more than you think. Age aside, anyone can help. We've all seen the incident where someone's binder falls apart in the hall, how many people do you see help them? How many people kick or tear or purposely step on them? What can we do to change that? That's what you should be asking yourself. No more "Why can't I help?", I want to hear "How can I help?" Because these days, it's not something that is said enough.

Last year, there was a girl-who is one of the cutest and sweetest I've seen-who is in a wheelchair. Some people had written extremely offensive stuff on the back of it. The school made an announcement, but I must have been zoned out or talking, because I don't recall it. They said how it got to the point where she was crying whenever someone asked her about it because it hurt her so much. We discussed it this year in class, and when the teacher asked who had comforted her when it happened, only one person raised their hand. One person. I still feel guilty about not doing anything about it today, even after a year. From a class of twenty, there should have been at least ten people who raised their hand, at least.

We want to live in a world where everyone in that class of twenty has their hand raised. We need to change the world. Because if we don't, who will? The bully won't. The principal won't. Who will have the biggest impact?

You.

Because even the smallest flower can bloom, it just needs some help getting there.

Be their water, be their light, help them grow.

“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes
powerful.”

Malala Yousafzai

Lara Mijic - 8th Grade
Butler Middle School - Teacher, Maria Powers



It is strange to think that violence is a word we hear or experience so frequently. Sometimes we forget the meaning of this robust word and its significant impact on the world. Sometimes we forget we have created an endless cycle of violence in our everyday lives. The question is: do we really wish to continue living this way?

Violence can be defined in many ways, although there are two basic kinds: physical and verbal violence. Both are equally atrocious and should be brought to immediate attention. Even though I have never experienced physical violence, I have been verbally bullied, as most youth could report. I have always been a relatively shy person by nature. A few grades back, there were some kids who simply took advantage of that. I know most everyone who has been in this situation can agree that the feeling that comes along with verbal violence is dreadful. I lost every bit of self-confidence I had, I felt frustrated, and I basically despised myself.

Take a minute to stop and think that the whole world could be feeling this way right now. Anyone, including the bullies and the victims combined could be consumed and traumatized by these horrible feelings. No one wants to live this way. We need to stop accepting this as if it were a part of our everyday lives.

To solve this problem, we must find its origins. Youth violence is not the only violence in the world. In fact, youth violence is derived from numerous other sources such as negative parental issues, certain video games, media, stressful situations at school and home, and so much more. Once we are under a bad influence, it is exceptionally hard to bring us back. It is important that those around us realize this before we fall subject to violent actions and continue this never-ending cycle with the next generation.

Now, I am not saying that it is only adults and other factors like media that effect youth violence. Every one of us youth affect it just as much. We probably do not notice it, but we all slap labels on people, whether we are thinking about it or not. We end up seeing each other as those labels and not as the humans we are. When you look at someone, do you think "Oh, that kid's a geek," or "that kid's a 'wannabe'?" Well, it does not just stop with youth. Adults tend to do this as well, and what we need to understand is that this mentality is completely wrong. If we see each other as labels or objects, we lose touch with them as human beings, and therefore it increases the chances that somebody will think it is okay to mistreat others.

So, remember, the next time you go to say something impertinent to a 'nerd', 'popular', or a 'band geek', know that their labels are only something created by society and that their personalities, their goals and dreams, their emotions, their secrets and fears are what is real. Remember that people have feelings and can be greatly hurt and impacted by any type of violence. Remember that you are only contributing to the list of benefactors for this relentless spiral of violence. Yes, it is okay to mess up in life every once in a while, but if you are purposely hurting people, then maybe you should stop and reevaluate your actions. Think: is it really worth it?

Besides our man-made labels, we have, over the course of time, become less and less aware of how we speak to one another. With youth especially, violence has become another layer in our language. Through television shows and movies we watch on a regular basis, we have absorbed that culture and way of speaking, which we apply to our daily communications. The "Hollywood culture," as I like to call it, is made for entertainment purposes, so when we see violence in these programs, we put into the perspective of entertainment. We laugh and think it is okay. We decide that violence is humorous and that those trying to put an end to it are a joke as well. This is not okay.

What can we do about it? The road to change begins with small steps. I can raise awareness of bullying starting with my group of friends. Expressing the seriousness of violence amongst ourselves is important. I will start by letting those around me know that violence is not something to laugh at nor are the people who are the trying to prevent it. We can control our actions no matter what. We can stand up for those in need even if we do not know them very well. If we are not there for one another, then who will be?

We all need to take a step forward. Raising awareness on this matter is somehow a challenge of its own. We seem to fear positive actions, for we may be considered "uncool" by the rest. But think of every hero in our past or present. They all took a small step in a different direction. They all took that step, which, at the time, could have caused them a lot of grief, but in the end they changed the world. Great change starts off small, but will evolve into something remarkable.

Aidan Nielsen – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kimberly Irvine



Making a Change

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

Smack! I heard the sound of my body getting thrown to the floor, and all I wanted to do was lay there melt away into the floor like frost in the morning. I started to taste the sweet hot blood in my mouth like warm cherry syrup. I could numbly hear the exploding laughter of other kids down the hall. The cooking class had just made waffles and the smell reminded me of almost every Sunday morning I could remember. I then looked up at the kid who had thrown me with his ring of friends around him and asked him what they were doing and he didn't respond just looked at me with those brown soulless eyes staring a hole inside of me. I will never forget that stare it was like someone had got a red hot fire poker and started to stab me with it. I stood up and he moved towards me like a shadow and all I could do was stand there frozen like a glacier. Just before he got to me I exploded like lightning landing a solid punch to his stomach and that's when he friends moved, blow after blow the reigned upon me like clockwork one after another and then they just drifted away leaving me in the hall like a wilted flower wanting to die.

Youth violence is when anyone next to you or a million miles away tries to put you down or pushes you or kicks you and punches you or calls you names. All in all it's just bullying. It's one person trying to get themselves up by putting others down.

To me youth violence is not only bullying but just putting people down. When your going down the hall and people glare at you or look at you and laugh and start whispering to their friends and you can only guess what things they're saying about you, I believe that that's just as much as youth violence as throwing someone to the ground and beating them up. People say that rhyme about sticks and stones as if broken bones don't hurt as much as getting called names. As people called us those names and we tried to empty ourselves out so we wouldn't feel the pain. I think that hurts more than any broken bone.

What causes youth violence is when one person sees another and thinks they're different and tells them to fix it, but not with kind words they yell at you and call you names and sometimes they don't have to even use words. It can be a push in the back or a punch in the stomach to tell you that you're not what they want you to be.

Youth violence has affected my life in many ways. Pretty much as long as I can remember i've always seen people getting bullied. There's always someone who is saying something rude or pushing someone. Most people probably don't notice it but to those who do get called those names or do get pushed around it means a lot. I know that when i get called those names it hurts more than the person saying it thinks it does.

I can try to stop youth violence. I can be a friend to anyone who looks sad or lonely. We can all do something to stop youth violence. Whether it be stand up for someone who you see is getting bullied or try to smile at someone who looks like they're having a hard day. We can be the person to stop the bully and make him a friend before he hurts others. We can right the wrong that maybe some of us have done to other people. We can be the bigger person and say we're sorry. But the way to stop youth violence is to start to be the friend who is nice to everyone and hope other people follow you.

In that moment

In that moment
i put a cast around my heart
It was empty.
No one signed it...ever
In that moment
I decided to shatter my heart
once and for all
So...
I didn't have to feel love and hurt
any longer.

In that moment
Some of us wore masks
so that our families didn't see
that we were dying...
Some of us cracked jokes and made many laugh
because my belief
was that, "as long as they're happy I'm irrelevant"

In that moment
I had finally come across someone like me
Someone who has also seen cruelty in her life
But I had shattered my heart already and felt nothing
Until one night, we lied next to each other under the stars we just lied there, silently
And for the first time in her life she fell asleep in peace
And for the first time my heart was healed
Two broken souls who have found peace with each other at last

My new mission is to make her smile each day
to ward off the darkness that surrounds her
And every time we talk and just be with each other I finally feel happy
And in that moment a smile I had lost long long ago is finally back.

Douglas Williams - 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kimberly Irvine



The Moment Time Stopped

When time stopped I could taste salty tears of anger and shock on my face. My anger was so thick around me I could smell it but the oblivious people at recess had been going on with their lives. His face remained emotionless as my fist made contact. My thoughts of hate boiled over like a pot of ignored spaghetti. Never in my life had I been so angry, never in my life had I shattered a soul with my hands dripping in cold blood.

Not until years later did I realize I had just bullied a bully. What led up to this day you may ask? Well it started with the ignoring of him like a man on the side of the road. His name did not matter much, because nobody talked with him. I hung out with him at recess until the day things changed. Nobody paid attention to him as he caused surreptitious mischief around the classroom. I helped him out with math or some other subject that he had a hard time with because my teacher assigned me to. Reluctantly I had helped him that was my reluctance was my first flaw.

The day things changed we were at recess like any other day. Then I saw him next to one of my friends I rolled my eyes as I walked over. He was picking on him, and I was planning to go over and tell him to stop calmly. That's when things escalated worse than they ever had, he turned on me and attacked like a lion. I was completely shocked like I had been struck by lightning and I became enraged as a bull and I retaliated. That was my second mistake.

That's when time froze, that's when I became the bully and that's when he ran. The next year he moved, and at first I thought "*well good I don't like that kid.*" Then I realized I might have been part of the cause and I was filled with regret of what I'd done, grief surged through me like darkness consuming a sunset for a month or two. Then I tried to forget what I had done because everyone else had. I had been the bully for that minute, I had wanted to hurt that kid emotionally and physically. Most people said it's natural but does that mean we are all natural bullies?

To this day I have become a bystander of bullying ignoring the pain I had caused. I have been afraid to become what I had become before. I focused on school and nothing else I ignored my friends. It was not until I got serious into acting that I let go of my meekness. What better ways to we have to get rid of bad memories by making good ones? This thought came to my head and as I was searching the internet I saw, "No matter how educated, talented, rich or cool you believe you are, how you treat people ultimately tells all." that's when I realized I had done my third mistake my whole life. Was there only three blind mice in the fairy tale? Maybe the rest couldn't be heard like the people who stand and take it. Are we all demontors sucking away people's happiness by not doing anything? We don't have to be the bully to bully the pain is just as bad when people do nothing like ignoring a bleeding limb instead of putting a bandaid on it.

Some say helping is unnecessary and striving to solve these horrendous problems is superfluous. These infect our society like fear infecting a fallen soldier. What would be better he might think? Dying on the inside or on the outside of our soul? Youth violence is a real problem, it is just as real as the wars and the arguments of the world. It is the shadow part of us and the youth of today are forced to take the violence directed at them. The torrent of insults and fists hurts just as much as the torrent of bullets and commands the military goes through. All the greed for power and control is a cause and a symptom that belongs to a curse a thousand times worse than any disease. It causes a desire and a belief to be better than other human beings, it is this

thought that drags you down. To me this lethal disease has been known only through the sufferings of others. Although I can still see the long scars of emotional pain it has caused and i know we all must stand up for each other. Whether caused by me or someone else the thing that does matter is that we stop, the way to stop this acidic cloud of power hungry monsters is to stop seeing people like that and see them the way they are. Bullying does not stop at the bullied it stops at the bully. We need to grab the bull by the horns and take action today. Every second someone is being bullied around the world. Bullying does not stop bullying, compassion does and forgiveness. We must help lift this dark cloud of hate and misunderstood fear. If you can't change it change how you see it, this quest to stop bullying is just as much mental as it is physical. If our help is one drop in the ocean then let it be one drop. Our acts are like the drops in the ocean they may seem small alone but we are never alone. We need to walk in someone else's shoes whether they are worn and torn or are fancy high heels. Understanding ourselves starts with understanding others, the more you learn the more you can teach. think about all the children in dire circumstances within our own country as we sing the anthem can we be proud of how we have helped each other? We need to rise up and make our voices known to stop the enemy who has unjustly corrupted us. We need to make this country the home of the brave and rise up to stop this fiend and monstrosity that haunts us like a shark awaiting its next victim. We have the right as americans to stop known obstacles how about we use it for a change.

all spectators see... is darkness

Their sight can be described like the darkness of night,
the empty plastic smiles filled with dull happiness,
they tell you to fight the good fight,
but they leave you with deceptive emptiness.

If only we tried to help those who suffer
when their hope pulls over on the freeway.
Instead, we buy new effective mufflers
concealing and silencing the leeway.

one spark may seem small
but it is better than none at all
this darkness people see
it is not all you can be

this is my voice
it may also be yours
don't you see we all have a choice
if we bully anymore?

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing



Honorable Mention

Maria Alfaro

7th Grade, Joel P. Jensen Middle School
Teacher, Anna McNamer

Maddyson Andersen

7th Grade, Spanish Fork Junior High
Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence

Karley Babcock

8th Grade, Butler Middle School
Teacher, Lisa McDonald

Alexandra Brenchley

7th Grade, Spring Creek Middle School
Teacher, Janet Willardson

Cole Clarkson

7th Grade, Kanab Middle School
Teacher, Jeanine Johnson

Kylee Henderson

8th Grade, Delta Middle School
Teacher, Colleen Atkinson

Ilanah Hunt

7th Grade, Draper Park Middle School
Teacher, Whitney Lee

Jaina Jacobsen

8th Grade, Mana Academy
Teacher, Grace Brown

Shaylee Johnsen

7th Grade, Lava Ridge Intermediate
Teacher, Rachel Robins

Kaelee Tanner

7th Grade, Sunrise Ridge Intermediate
Teacher, Jessica Larsen

Eden Ward

7th Grade, West Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Stacey Sawyer

Clinton Westerman

7th Grade, Joel P. Jensen Middle School
Teacher, Paige Dayley

Maria Alfaro - 7th Grade
Joel P. Jensen Middle School - Teacher, Anna McNamer



"Everything happens for a reason," was a quote I have been growing up hearing all my life. As an adolescent, I feel like I'm starting to understand what truly happens in the outside world. The life we live in is not some kind of fairy tale story, where nothing bad happens and you live the life you want to. The world can be a deep, dark place, depending on whom the person you are. It can even be just your mind that haunts you or drowns you scarcely into your own thoughts.

I've experienced many difficult and scary things along my journey to growing up. I'm only 12 so I guess it's easy for someone older to say that it's nothing compared to them. I lost my hero, my guide, the person who was always there for me, many years ago. Why did destiny choose him and not me? I think to myself. But "everything has a cause, you might not like the effect" (Phora, Deeper Than Blood). It took time for me to finally accept and believe that everything does happen for a reason. I always question myself, or the universe, or whatever is beyond life, why it chose us to come into this beautiful, scary heavens of the earth.

Depression runs in my family. My grandma has depression which many blame her, that she's the reason I have depression too. I don't blame anyone but myself. No ones responsible for my actions, for my sadness, for my struggles, but me. Sometimes I'm so down, that I feel like my angles are dancing with death.

There was a point where my demons got a hold of my angles. My mom knew about my struggle but did nothing to help. It made me feel like I was drowning, except everyone around me knew I was dying, but did nothing to help. She'd yell at me all the time, making my happiness drain down and my sadness rise up. I drank bleach that night, and got rushed to the hospital at 1 a.m. After they flushed the bleach out of my body, I was put into a mental hospital. I was in there for 12 days and 11 nights. I never realized how much pain I had put my parents into... But I'm not ashamed at my choices because that made me realize that they actually cared.

Now that I'm recovering from the scars left from the past, I feel like there is hope in this world but you just got to reach out. I used to handle my sadness by cutting but that affected my family so much. "The choices you make don't only affect you but they also affect the people you love and care about," (Phora, Deeper Than Blood). There's times when you could feel hopeless and weak, but "even when you feel alone you're really not I promise you but sometimes all you really got is you," (Phora, Reflections).

I believe that people do not change, you just find out who they really are... Deep under their skin and flesh is their soul which hides who they really are. The outside of us is just like a costume, because there's more inside of us than just skin. Someone can act the way they act, because of scars in their life from the past. But who are you to judge?

Self-harm is a form of youth violence, because you're hurting yourself. It doesn't mean you're a crazy person for doing it, it just means it's your way to cope with depression. But you can get help! There are other ways that don't involve you hurting yourself because of the pain. But you just need a voice, speak up, and get the help you deserve. I'm happy I did.

"Broken crayons can still color."

Maddyson Andersen - 7th Grade
Spanish Fork Junior High - Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence



Stop The Bullies!

Violence does not solve your problems. Violence doesn't make your life better. Why do people think that violence makes everything better? Bullying is a type of violence, and it should stop. Let's work together to stop bullying!

Fourth grade was the worst school year ever. I was bullied almost everyday by the same exact girl. She would call me ugly, fat, worthless, and once she even told me to kill myself. I would go home and cry for a really long time. At the end of the school year I decided to put an end to it. No I didn't go up to her and yell, no I didn't hit her. I decided to do the WRITE thing. My mom found a card in the cupboard and I wrote her a little note. It said things like, can we just be friends and please stop saying hurtful things to me. After that we became really good friends and we have been friends ever since. I am really glad I made my decision to stop it and everyone should try to stop bullying.

I went to school with a girl that looked and acted different than everyone else. No, she didn't have mental issues but everyone was really rude about it. They would make fun of her because of who she was. I started to talk to her more herself. She is one of the nicest human beings

I have ever met. I got really sick of people calling girls ugly! First, I asked my teacher how many girls were in the grade. Then, I went home and cut little rectangles of paper out and wrote "You Are Beautiful" on every single one. I went to school early one morning and put one of those little notes on every single girl's desk. Seeing the smile on some of those girl's faces made me so happy I almost cried. Even the littlest things can make the biggest difference!

There is movie called *Cyberbully* and it is the saddest story ever. There is a girl who really is a pretty girl. Another girl goes online everyday and says the worst things about that girl. She said so many hurtful things. It got so bad that the girl actually tried to kill herself. She did end up living but i was crying by the end. It made me look at people a lot differently.

You have heard of the movie *Mean Girls* right? Well there is a really good example of bullying in it. Regina George, and her two little minions have created something called "The Burn Book". They take pictures of all the girls in school and write the worst thing they can think of them. Regina makes copies of every single page in the book and places them all over the school. Everyone ends up being mad at there best friends and it is a disaster. Everyone does make up but, none of that would have ever

happened if those three girls didn't make that stupid book. Gossip is bullying so don't think it isn't.

As you can see bullying really doesn't make life better. It just makes it twenty times worse. When I was in elementary our school motto was "Be a bully blocker". Bullying doesn't only make the person that is being bullied feel bad, but it also doesn't feel good to be a bully. Stop the bullying and it will make you feel really good inside.

STOP THE BULLIES!!

Karley Babcock - 8th Grade
Butler Middle School - Teacher, Lisa McDonald



How Youth Violence has Affected my life

Youth violence affects everyone, whether they notice or not. It's hidden in the school bully, the drug user, and the abused. I have seen, as well as experienced youth violence. I come from a broken home that has been glued back together so many times that on the outside it looks rough. But, on the inside, it has been strengthened by our experiences. Both of my parents are recovering drug users, and I believe that their addictions stems from their childhood. They were both abused as children, from peers and parents. My parents came from unstable homes that had no intentions of fixing them, and in turn they started using. This is one example of youth violence and how it leads to worse things later in life. I'm sure you're wondering what this has to do with me, well, until just recently, I lived in a home full of users. Now, people who haven't gone through it don't understand how bad it actually is. So many people are blind to drug use, and the effects on others. Children are neglected, people turn to shoplifting and burglary, and it emotionally wrecks family members. I'm not writing about this for sympathy, I writing about this because people need to understand that youth violence isn't always just the bully. Youth violence can be countless other things. Myself, and so many others struggle everyday with depression, and different forms of anxiety. Depression often times, leads to self violence. Which brings me to my next topic, mental illness. I struggle with depression, and PTSD. This, I believe, is caused by the traumatic things that I've gone through. These things to make life hard, sometimes seemingly impossible. In our society, especially in my age group, self harm and suicidal thoughts/actions are very common. This is another type of youth violence. Depression can be caused by a number of things. It can erupt from constant bullying, family history, and problems at home. This is something that is not talked about as much, and for some it's an uncomfortable topic. Those who have depression/anxiety are often encouraged to hide it. Society thinks that these things make you "weird". I think that this is why so many young people turn to social media as their support group, because often times people on the internet are more supportive than your closest friends. Now, to answer the last question. What can I do about Youth Violence? I can be a friend, a shoulder to lean on, and a ally. So many people think that this question is asking them to change the world, but it's not that easy. I am a supporter of the AFSP (American Foundation For Suicide Prevention), as well. I think that just being an ally to anyone in need is the best thing you can do. Were all going through something, and you never know if what you say could put someone over the edge. And that's what people don't ever realize. We've all hear that rhyme "Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me", but in reality how can a broken bone be worse than a broken spirit. I hope that this clears up some of what our young people today are going through.

Alexandra Brenchley - 7th Grade
Spring Creek Middle School - Teacher, Janet Willardson



Notice

I feel very alone,
I don't know what to do,
Those kids at school have been bugging me,
I can't figure out why they are so rude.
I need someone to help me,
But I don't know how to ask,
I feel like they are ignoring me,
Like I am in the past.
My mom is an alcoholic,
My dad abuses me,
I spend most of my time in my room,
Thinking about why this has to be.
I feel like I'm invisible,
I eat my lunch alone,
I walk down the halls by myself,
All on my own.
Sometimes I wake up in the morning,
And smell the cigarette air,
And hear my parents yelling at each other,
As I walk down the stairs.
I pack up all my things,
Into an old worn sack,
I head down to the bus stop,
And line up in the back.
I sometimes dream what it would be like,
To live a normal life,
But I know for a fact with the way I live,
That life is not in sight.
I always feel awful and sad,
And I still can't figure out,

*Why, with whatever happens,
I always seem to doubt.
I know that I have problems,
And that is plain to see,
I feel like I am nothing,
Like I wasn't meant to be.
I hope that you now see,
That there are others like this,
Think about someone,
who you dismiss.
Now that you know,
That people out there need help,
Think of them first,
And don't think about yourself.*

Cole Clarkson - 7th Grade
Kanab Middle School - Teacher, Jeanine Johnson



You Are Important

Bullying; what's the meaning of that word. It is just a word, but it can make a difference in someone's life. Bullying can be defined in many different ways, Cyber bullying, child abuse, physical bullying, all those many things. Most bullies are going through hard things at home and they put other people down to make them feel like they are the highest, but they really aren't. That's why you can't let them into your life. Bullying can be physical or emotional either way it can get to you and make you feel like you are not worth anything.

Although suicide should not happen bullies still do it when they think everyone hates them, but what they don't know is they matter to someone. It is not the whole world against you, someone cares about you. You have your family and your friends, your teachers those kind of people don't want to tear you down they want to build you up to be the best you can be. Like this quote says "Never be bullied in silence, never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life, but define yourself"-Harvey Fierstein.

I had an experience that I had when I was in 3rd grade. When I was sitting there, listening to the dead silence. I was thinking about how I was going to avoid the bully after school. The second the bell rang then I ran out of my class running as fast I could and as I was running I saw the bully from behind a tree and shoved me into a puddle of mud. I stood up and wiped the mud of my pants and shirt and walked to the buses.

Even though I was bullied I looked at the good in myself and I became the friend and the person I wanted to be. To this day that kid is still not the nicest kid, but I don't

listen to the nasty words that he tells me I just ignore him and that is how I stopped him from bullying me. You don't have to be bullied in silence like Harvey Fierstein said don't be the victim be the one that is ahead of the bully don't let the bully get to you. Bullies want attention, they want to make themselves feel on top of everyone just be the kid that is nice to him and he might become your friend.

Besides everyone can do a simple thing every day to prevent a lot of youth violence. It can be just saying "Hi" to someone in the halls or talk to the bully or the person that is being bullied. That is just a small thing you can do, also the bully probably just wants a friend so once in awhile hang out with him or her.

The person that is being bullied go and talk to them stand up for them don't be the person that laughs with the bully. Be the kind of person that people can trust and that can be their friend. Most bullies don't even realize that they're doing anything until it gets bad enough that they want to commit suicide. If you are the person that is getting bullied, look for the good in yourself before you want people to love you, You have to love yourself.

We can all make a difference in our lives we just have to see it, and make it happen. Your opinion is the only opinion that matters let no one define who you are. When you all are being friends to one another then there won't be a bully and when there is no bully no one has to feel like nothing. For the most part, when there is a bully be their friend so they don't feel like they are worth nothing. That is what we can do to prevent bullying, but always remember you are important.

Kylee Henderson - 8th Grade
Delta Middle School - Teacher, Colleen Atkinson



DO THE WRITE THING

Youth violence, youth violence has affected me in ways that I cannot begin to explain.

But I can tell you how it felt,
it felt like being in a plane and then
suddenly
all at once
you're quickly falling,
falling further

and further from yourself.

Feeling that the only way out
is to give in.

But this poem is dedicated to the
Long Nights

stayed up planning my demise, in a mind that demanded to hate myself.

In a mind that told me
to hide my pain on some shelf,
to keep it hidden in some locket, to store it in some pocket of a pair
of jeans I've never worn.

This is for the torn arms, bruised hands for the stand alone sing song that
nobody knows the words to.

But the truth is I was surprised by the dexterity in their animosity,
I was surprised by my curiosity in this
monster called a bully.

Even now I can never fully understand how to answer the question, "is
everything going to be okay?"

Because the fact of the matter is it might not be.

Most people ask me,

"What can we do about youth violence, how can we fix it?"

But the truth is you cannot fix something
that isn't broken,

this isn't like some chucky cheese token that you can give and never get back.

This is for

the stolen backpacks for the negative feedback,
for all the times that we have fallen, fallen for the
idea that we are worthless.

In my opinion youth violence is cause by boredom, boredom in the antagonist's life.

The fact that they have apathy in their own lives.

But I feel pity for the bully,
I pity them because for years I became the one thing I loathed, a bully.
I became the monster, I've been hiding from
as I walk down the long school halls humming all the words to a song of silence.
I felt trapped inside a fence of my fears.
Earlier many of you remember I told you most people ask me
"what can we do about youth violence, how can we fix it?"

I often say the only way to fix this
is to fix us.
That the bus that holds beauty is something we
all wish to ride upon. But honestly you have beauty beyond measure.
I'll close the poem by saying
it's been my pleasure, I have loved sharing my story with you, I hope you did too.

Ilanah Hunt - 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Whitney Lee



Finding Peace

Many people shrug off violence, thinking that it's okay, after all don't we see violence in action movies? Isn't *that* okay? The answer is no, violence isn't okay. Violence has many definitions to different people. Some describe it as physically, verbally hurting someone. Others may describe it as hurting someone mentally and emotionally. *I* describe it as most of my life.

Violence has always been a big part of my life, and not *ever* in a good way. As long as I could remember my eldest sister has been abusive. Although, I wasn't the only target. My two other sisters-known as Cora and Melanie- were also hurt. Whenever my dad wasn't home the eldest, let's call her Laura, was either at a friend's house or hurting us. When my dad came home my sisters and I would tell him what Laura did, who quickly denied it. Yet, that didn't fool him. He would always tell her off, but she didn't listen. She just continued to abuse all of us. Melanie, the second eldest, would always take grab the hands of Cora and myself and lock the three of us in my father's room until Laura left to a friends house. For clarification, Cora is the youngest of the four of us, and the most vulnerable.

I lived most of my life in that small apartment. Always feeling like I was worthless. After all, my mother must have never loved us, because she got a divorce with my father before I could remember. All I was told about the matter was a simple, "Mom loves you, she's just sick." Perhaps that's why Laura hates us so much. Did she blame us for everything? I've heard people say that humans get violent because that's all they know, or have ever known. I think different people have different reasons to be violent, yet none of them are good. Some kids-or adults-could be like me and have been abused. Others could just have a different mind set. But none of that matters. No matter the reason, nobody should be violent. Get help if you need it, just don't become what you've always feared.

Years later we moved to a different part of the city. Sadly, nothing changed, Laura still gave us bruises. But this time dad got a new job with much longer hours. More time for Laura to get angry. The funny thing is, is that after she was done hitting and screaming, she would cry. Saying things like, " You guys made me into this. You did this to me, you ruined my life." Yet I always comforted her. I always felt guilty for absolutely nothing. She could have busted my ankle and I still would have sat there comforting her. Later our landlords who owned the house above the basement thought it was my father who hurt us. *Obviously* it wasn't. Three years was spent in that house, and none of them was Laura-free. Then we moved again, this time into a whole different city. Laura was still there, but eventually, she got help. My family started to go to therapy, but the scars were-and are- still there.

Looking back, I realize now how brave I was...but also how much I actually need help after saying that I'm fine a million times. Wearing a smile on my face to cover up my real feelings isn't very healthy. I bottle everything up and internalize it, sometimes making me sick from stress which isn't healthy either. Yet I *still* never tell anyone what I truly am feeling. Luckily, I have

loving family and friends. People who know and understand what I've been through. My dad was in a situation just like me. His real mother (Dad's father got remarried after divorcing my Gram and grandpa's wife was abusive.) was abused just like her son and granddaughter. Some of my friends have had similar experiences. One of my friends was abused by her mother. My sister Melanie became distant from everyone for a while after everything happened. Cora just became very rude. My dad became much, much nicer. I talked to my Gram almost every night, and in turn, I stopped talking to my mom completely. I wish everyone knew how to stop violence. My solution is to be kind to everybody because you don't know the whole story, or what's happened to them. So what gives you the right to be rude? If I could, I'd give everyone who has had traumatizing things happen to them a hug. If only people in this world were kinder. Violence probably wouldn't be very common. My life was turned upside down just by one thing. If I could count the amount of people who have been scarred by violence, I'd spend my whole life counting. People could be hurt every five seconds, and that isn't okay. We all need to take a stand up to violence. To stop it. This is what violence has done to *me*. What has it done to you? More importantly, will *you* take a stand against violence?

Jaina Jacobsen - 8th Grade
Mana Academy - Teacher, Grace Brown



youth violence

How youth violence has affected my life is it turned my best friend, someone i wanted to spend all my time with into someone i was scared for. She slowly got deeper and deeper into the violence and i couldn't help her.

She started acting meaner to others and crying more because she didn't like the way things were. She hurt herself and i could only watch and cry hoping she wouldn't go too far. I begged and pleaded for her to stop but she only pushed me away. Because she pushed me away i could do little to help her. I'd stay awake at night hoping she was okay.

She locked me out when i asked her why? I couldn't hold on anymore, so i let go. I watched from afar praying she would find someone who could make her stop hurting herself when i couldn't. It hurt so much to let her go. After being best friends for years. After she helped me out of my loneliness. But i had to, or i would get dragged down with her. When she started doing the things i feared she would. Like the drugs her older sister did, or the fights her older friends go into. Youth violence took her away from me and i could only watch and regret not doing more to help.

I believe the cause of youth violence are the people you hang out with, how your parents acted around you, and social media.

The people you hang out with will influence the way you act. If the people you hang around of all the time do or start to do thing like bully, drugs, or get into fights all the time they're going to start to pull you down with them. When you hang around people like this it will get harder and harder for you to resist doing the things they do. It will get to the point where you won't resist doing the bad things they do no matter if you know it's wrong. Because if they do then it must be ok or you won't get caught.

The way your parent act around you will sway your thinking of wrong or right. Kids learn most of what they know or believe from the parents. If there parents act bad or do bad things there kid will follow in their footsteps most of the time. If a child grows up not learning rule or not being disciplined for breaking these rule they will start to think that they don't have to follow them. The way a child acts is influenced by the way the see others acted.

Nowadays were told by social media that doing theses things are OKAY and that there just for FUN, or your COOL if you do theses things. Some social media say "look everyone else is doing it so should you!" Social media is a way for bullying to spread. We can't get rid of social media but we can change the views it has on things like drugs, bullying and, fights!

There are many things you and i can do to stop youth violence. We need to show people that we're not afraid and it's ok to stand up to those who incharge violence. If people see us standing up to those people they will get the courage to stand up too. The more and more people who stand up will create a place where others will feel like it's safe and they don't have to do drugs or be mean to fit in.

It will be hard to make a place like this, lots of other will be angry because they feel like they won't be able to change. These people will want to bring it down. To make others unhappy because they're not happy. Some will find it hard because they're scared to leave the friends they've known for a long time but have changed. we will need to help them and those who don't think they can change. It will be hard but we can do it!

"You may feel weak, but within you is the strength to leave, within you is the strength to overcome and achieve that which you deserve."

-from stories of survivors

Over time you will make new friends like i did and they won't bring you down they'll build you up! They will help you and you in turn will help them find new friends or helping them change so they can help change others. We could help so many all we need to do is show them that they don't need to do bad things to be cool, and all we would need is people who are willing to take the first step.

We also need to show them that things like drugs and bullying are wrong and that they won't make you cool. We need to do more than just telling them. We need to show them what happens when you do these thing. We need to show them that they're not just fun and games but they hurt yourself and others.

Youth violence hurts many and will keep hurting people if we do nothing to stop it

Shaylee Johnsen - 7th Grade
Lava Ridge Intermediate- Teacher, Rachel Robins



I was only ten. My brother was very agitated. Enough he tried to kill himself and others. This happens all over the world. Youth violence, infact all violence, only causes harm. Everyone has a personal experience about it. Youth violence, especially, has affected everyone, including me.

Little things can cause big things to happen, good or bad. Everyone gathers stress, hate, anger, sadness, etc. Everyone relieves themselves of it in different ways. Maybe work, exercise, art, punching something (not someone), screaming, everyone has a different way. But some people express their anger in a different way, like violence. Some people just keep it bottled up, letting it explode like a volcano at any moment. The smallest thing can set it off. Maybe someone cheating, doing something wrong, or maybe it erupts for absolutely no reason at all. Some people have a rough life, then take it out on others.

This is the cause of bullying, or suicide perhaps. Maybe their parents are divorced, or their parents beat them, or maybe someone bullied them. But, as a parent, how would you feel hitting your kid. I know that kids don't like it at all. You brought this human to life, or gave it a home, past that, you hit this sweet angel, or not so sweet angel, either way. But it is not only adults that do it, teens and children do it too. They hit each other, or do something awful to them. But as a youth, you start this horrible way to get all your anger energy.

Everything starts in a home, my experience did, and everyone's experience did. My brother was fifteen. He was having a rough afternoon, and he exploded, like many others, at the littlest thing. My brother and mother were talking about something that I didn't hear. I was downstairs doing dishes. The rest of my siblings were playing outside and my dad was at work. Next thing I knew, my brother ran down the stairs. My mother caught him and held him. He got away and rushed to the kitchen, which held the knife drawer. I had no idea what was going on. I was scared for me, my mom, and my brother. He yanked the drawer open and grabbed the largest knife he could find. He first pointed it at me, then mother, then himself. My mom yelled at me to go outside. The last thing I saw before I went outside was my brother breathing deep, ready to push the knife into his heart and my mother rushing towards him with a look of complete horror on her face. I went outside and told my siblings. The blinds on the windows were down so we couldn't see what was happening. My older sister comforted my younger brother and sister. I comforted my dog, Oreo, who was going crazy. My younger sister then suggested that we go to the neighbors house and call the police and my dad. We agreed and went over together. The kind neighbors of course said yes. We called and explained the situation to my dad and the police officer that answered our call. After that, we stayed at the neighbor's house. My younger brother and sister nervously watched the television while my older sister and I anxiously visited with the kind neighbor. Finally, the police came to the house that was up the street, the one that we were in, and told us everyone was fine. They told us to stay at the neighbor's house for a while, then we could come home. When we were allowed to walk home, we left

immediately. When we got there, my brother was sitting out front with a couple E.M.T.s and a police officer. The two police cruisers and the ambulance were parked out front. In the driveway were my grandmother's truck and my father's avalon. When my two sisters, my brother and I went inside, I nearly broke down. My mother was inside with my father and grandma holding her up. The police officers were talking to them. My older sister herded me and my siblings into the family room. Soon, we heard the door close and all the commotion go away. I looked out the window, my father and brother went with the police to the youth crisis center. I crept up the stairs. My grandmother was rubbing some essential oils on my mom's neck. My mother was crying. My heart ached, no kid could stand to see their mother cry. That afternoon has haunted me ever since. I always kept thinking, "What could I have done?"

There is no definite thing that anyone could do to end youth violence. Unless, everyone in the world agreed. There is something everyone, me, you, everyone, could do to start ending it. Start in your home. Be nice to everyone in your household, then your community, then everyone you meet. Reach out to others, be helpful, don't say negative things, and lift others up. I have been affected by youth violence, everyone has. Doesn't matter if it is a family member, friend, teacher, classmate, relative, you can't avoid being affected if something happens.

In conclusion, there is something everyone can do to avoid youth violence. Even if it is just something little, little things cause big things. Be kind and generous. Help others on their way. "Goodness is about character - integrity, honesty, kindness, generosity, moral courage, and the like. More than anything else, it is about how we treat other people." - Dennis Prager.

Kaelee Tanner – 7th Grade
Sunrise Ridge Intermediate – Teacher, Jessica Larsen



Do the Write Thing.

They stand around you in a circle, their words like a swarm of bees piercing deep into your skin. “You’re ugly!” “You’re fat.” “Your hair looks terrible!” This is youth violence and it sucks. It is getting worse and it has to stop now. We have to make a move.

Yes, it has happened to me. I have seen it, felt it, and have done it from time to time. What may seem harmless to you can be a grenade without a pin in someone else’s hand. On phones, in letters, even face to face. It doesn’t matter who you are, or how you choose to break someone’s heart, it is never okay.

My life was turned upside down by three girls who thought telling me I was nothing and that I would go nowhere in life was funny. I believed them. I thought those things. I knew they were lies, but a lie can wear a sheep’s skin and blend in with the truth. Soon my thoughts become dark and I acted upon them. I hurt my brother because I was hurt and depressed. I pushed my best friend away and all she wanted to do was help. I hurt others to make my hurt go away. It got so bad my mother made the decision to have me change schools. All this, caused by three girls who thought they were cool.

I have gone many nights thinking about why people have done such harsh things. Why is there human trafficking? Why are bullies are bullies? Why are children forced to do terrible things? The truth is, I do not know. I have been told that bullies are rude due to lack of self esteem, and why people trade their own children to go and work for the rest of their lives is for money, but sometimes we don't always get straight answers. There is true sadness and evil in this world. There are things that make people want to do such harsh things. They even push people to killing themselves. I have tried to make sense of it but, I can never fully grasp why people do what they do. All I know is that we can't control the world, but we can control how the stings of the swarm affect our own thoughts.

I know I am a small child with big dreams, but even the smallest dreamers can have the best ideas. I also know there are people are all over the world trying to get things done about this war, but I would like you to listen to me. I don't want anyone to get hurt anymore. Pushing people to think that what they are doing is wrong while promoting your own lie is just adding to the cycle. To hurt another person to elevate yourself is wrong whether you a twelve year old girl or a five star general. Peace is created not forced.

I would love to have a place that is peaceful where people could go and talk about the swarm in their life. Not a Doctor's office with scary old people asking you things you don't want to be asked, but a safe place full of warmth and nice people who would love to listen to you through the rough trials in life. Somewhere that you know your voice will be heard. People who you can talk to who have felt the sting as well.

The swarm is back once again, saying harsh and rude things but instead of crying or taking it all in you stand up. You look right in their eyes and say "I know that what you are saying is not true. I am a truly kind person. I am not ugly, I am not overweight, and I know that I am going to go places in life. The things you say are not right. Please stop because you do not want to be in the place I am in now. Let's all be friends and put an end to this once and for all." Even though hate may dwell in the world, you can be the one who stands up and lights the torch of rebellion for peace.

Eden Ward - 7th Grade
West Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Stacey Sawyer



The Right Friends

Bullying is a very common thing. We talk about stopping it a lot, but it's still here. Our teachers and administrators tell us to put ourselves in the shoes of those being bullied, or even the bystanders. But have they ever asked you to put yourself in the bullies' shoes?

Why do they do it? Why do Bullies hurt people? I think people are asking the wrong questions. We should be asking ourselves, what caused the bully to hurt others? Are they doing it to get attention? Did they learn it was okay? Do they want to look cool? Be popular? Just feel big and strong? Is it attitude from home?

Some Bullies just do it to be popular, but a lot of people do it because of jealousy or they don't have good friends. No friends is a thing that can make people feel worthless, and they want to feel important or strong. Some people think that being mean will help you make friends.

In elementary, I had two great friends. We looked and acted the same. In fourth grade. We all changed a little bit. I stood out while they became even more alike. I was left out and eventually you could tell I didn't fit in. So I left. I made some other really great friends and finally found a new place to settle when a fight broke between the two girls. One of them hadn't seen her dad in forever because her parents were divorced and the other girl's family were going into debt, and they both burst with feelings around the same time. Everyone started taking sides. The entire grade split up and I was in the middle. Alone. Both girls tried to get me on their side. First they tried pointing out each other's flaws. One girl was too skinny and was starving herself. The other one lied about her friendship. When pointing out flaws didn't work, one girl tried making herself look vulnerable and the other one started spreading rumors about me and framed the other one. It nearly broke me. One of my new friends saw what was happening

and left the side she was on too join me in the neutral group. She was the greatest friend you could have. I stopped listening to the rumors and complaints, and soon after, the “war” ended. I talked to the girls, and found out why it happened. I became an extra supportive friend. And mended all the friendships I could. I helped with heartbreaks and anything else anyone needed.

Friends can make your life paradise, but they can make you miserable. It’s up to you to choose the right friends. Even no friends are better than bad friends. If you choose good friends, then your life will be happier and you won’t have a ton of the drama other people have. Bad friends can hurt you, and as I said before, make your life miserable. Choose your friends wisely.

We can stop bullying very easily, if we just try. Kill them with kindness. I know that’s kind of cheesy, but it’s true. If we were nice to everyone and befriend those who need it, we can stop bullying. Choose the right friends.

Clinton Westerman - 7th Grade
Joel P. Jensen Middle School - Teacher, Paige Dayley



The Different Forms of Youth Violence

Youth violence is a real problem that we face today but this is a predicament that needs to be addressed and fixed and not pushed under the rug for a later time, this needs to be dealt with now. This problem is so severe that each day sixteen people between the age of ten and twenty-four are killed in the U.S.(CDC 2009). Let's imagine that one day you get a call from the police saying that a relative or a friend has just been killed due to youth violence, how would you feel? Well that happens to more than sixteen people in the united states. that is why this needs to have support behind it and we all need to chip in to do our part to stop this affliction that plagues america. But to do so we need to know what it is.

In America almost everyone is or has been involved in youth violence of some form whether it is Physical Violence, Dating Violence, Predatory Violence, Situational Violence and Relational Violence. What do these things all have in common? Well put simply they hurt. Sometimes youth violence takes the dark form of bullying this is some of the most painful and the pain is like a large chunk of your flesh has been torn away and while the surface may appear healed the pain is still there. In some cases of bullying it gets so severe that the victim can have suicidal thoughts. Here is one of those sad and dark stories...

Even though we may not realise it, youth violence affects us all. For my sister it was bullying and she was bullied almost all her school life gaining in intensity throughout the years and she eventually started to cause physical pain to lower the emotional pain by cutting herself. As for her feelings toward the bullies well she was very mad and scared. Before the bullying she was an amazingly kind and happy person but after she was mad all the time and she made bad choices. It only got worse. She turned to other bodily harms and became suicidal and her formally amazing self spiralled down into a dark hole.

She graduated high school and gave a speech about how she herself was surprised she'd made it through school and how she had been bullied all through school and had very few friends. But despite all that she is now an amazing mother and young woman, and although you may not see it every day she feels the pain and sadness of being bullied and those thoughts that she had and wants to help prevent others from having that pain as well.

Some of the causes of youth violence are: the media, substance abuse, gangs, unemployment, poverty, weapons, peer pressure, broken homes, poor family environment / bad neighborhoods and intolerance / ignorance. This all goes back to their environment family and community and if these things are bad for someone then we need to reach out with loving hands and bring them above this by helping them with their struggle. People who are involved in youth violence are deprived of their maximum potential. For example if someone is bullied then that person may want to or will commit suicide and think about what that person could have done in their lifetime but will never get to do or what if they are victims of homicide, one of those sixteen people or even if they are the perpetrator then the resulting guilt can last a lifetime and they may kill themselves because the guilt is too much to bare because they may have been pressured to do commit the homicide by their accomplices and peers

Now that the problem has been addressed and we know what we are up against we can do something about it. But what can we do? Well kids can prevent it by: settling arguments with words, learn safe routes in the neighborhood/ places to seek out help, follow your gut's sense of danger, avoid bad people and be aware of people you travel and talk with (lapdonline.org). Adults can report incidents and teach people about how to better avoid and prevent the problem.

So all in all this is a serious problem that needs fixing because these youth are our future and we all want a good future. So know what to do and teach kids what to do. Adults please teach

the youth how to stand up to bullying, how to solve problems with words, how to be safe and avoid trouble.



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