

**Table of Contents**

Utah's Challenge..... 2

**National Finalists**

Makenna Corry..... 5

McKinley Helton ..... 7

**National Runners Up**

Bethany Butt..... 13

Moses Stewart ..... 16

**State Finalists**

Sabrina Banh ..... 19

Ethan Decaria ..... 25

Cameron Holman ..... 28

Davis McBride ..... 29

Hope Mendenhall ..... 32

Breanna Stewart ..... 35

James Sybrowsky ..... 37

Harlie Thompson..... 41

**Honorable Mention**

Nathan Estes..... 44

Noah Fewkes ..... 48

Carissa Henson..... 50

Tyler Macievic ..... 52

Emma Madsen ..... 55

Ashtyon Neal..... 58

Lorren Weller..... 61

Samuel Ziemski..... 65

**Utah Board of Juvenile Justice**

Membership ..... 67

**Do the Write Thing 2017 VIP Judges**

**Judith Atherton**, CCJJ Chair  
*Retired Third District Court*

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

**Susan Burke**, Director  
*Utah Division of Juvenile Justice Services*

**Chief Doug Diamond**  
*West Jordan Police Department*

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

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

**Derek Parra**  
*Olympic Medalist*

**Carter Piggott**  
*2016 DtWT National Finalist*

**Kylee Vandecar**  
*2016 DtWT National Finalist*

**Lauren Wilson**  
*Miss Utah 2016*

**Katherine Younker**  
*Wheeler Foundation*

**Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee**

Spencer Larsen  
Andrea Gutierrez  
Nindy Le, Chair  
Van Nguyen, Coordinator

UTAH'S SEVENTEENTH 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 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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 over 2,000 students participated in classroom discussions, 1,937 students wrote about youth violence and over 900 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

Viridian Salt Lake County Library's Event Center

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

*National Finalists*

*Makenna Corry*

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Ashley Hauber*

*McKinley Helton*

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

**Makenna Corry - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Ashley Hauber**



Youth violence is happening all over the world. It's happening with the girl who sits in the back of the classroom, keeping to herself. It's happening to the boy who sits alone at lunch because anywhere else he sits, everyone moves away. It affects people in the most terrible ways possible. It leads to depression and suicidal thoughts and actions. It leads to insecurities and self doubt.

I've unfortunately been affected by youth violence, and I've caused someone else to be affected. In third grade, there was a girl in my class who didn't have as nice of clothes as everyone else and she didn't really have any friends. At recess, she sat alone, picking the dandelions from the grass on the hill. My friends and I would always tease her, asking, "Hey, why you picking flowers?" using a rude tone. Don't forget our constant reminder, "Don't get stung by a bee!" This carried on for a while. I didn't see the harm in it, being as I was only in third grade. Until one day, we were assigned to perform in the talent show together. I was furious, thinking things like "Why her? She's so weird," and "This is so embarrassing." I really didn't like this girl. I told my mom about this, and she suggested we practice for it. Giving in, I agreed to go to her house. This girl and her two smaller siblings lived in a two bedroom apartment, and their father was in a wheelchair. As soon as I stepped through the door, my stomach twisted with guilt and my chest got tight. I was embarrassed. No, not because I was hanging out with her or being seen with her, but I was embarrassed because I had been the one to cause pain to someone for no good reason when she had already been having a hard time. It was like something snapped inside of me, and my demeanor toward her was completely different. I was nice to her and I accepted her and I helped her. And with every practice and every time I'd gone over to her house, I found her and myself becoming friends. She wasn't nearly as bad as I had thought, and I'm glad my assumptions were wrong.

Unfortunately, I have been bullied before as well. In fourth grade, I moved 3 hours away. I was at a new school, and even though it was scary, fourth grade was perfect. When fifth grade came, however, that's when the bullying started. It was dumb, and I really wished that the bully could see how childish and immature she was being. I had a crush on a boy, and he had a crush on me too. We would play together at recess and his friends and my friends got along perfectly. Just a small crush in fifth grade. So what happened? I got bullied. The other girls that liked him would spread "rumors" about me and make fun of me and whisper and laugh and point at me as I walked by. They turned all my friends against me, and I wanted to scream and kick and cry because it was a crush. A silly little schoolgirl crush in the fifth grade. Luckily, I moved again in the sixth grade. No bullying has happened for a long time, and I am happy.

Youth violence isn't always caused by things like old clothes or sitting alone at lunch. Sometimes, the bully is the one getting bullied. Bullying is caused by many reasons, such as trouble at home, insecurities, and peer pressure. Sometimes people don't know how to act upon their actions and the only thing they can think of is violence. They want someone else to know

what they feel, how they feel. They want to know they're not alone. Maybe they feel so insecure that they think hurting other people will bring their self esteem up. It doesn't, however. Bullying doesn't end your own pain, it just passes it on to someone else. Bullying won't raise your self esteem and confidence, it will only lower it and someone else's. Don't bully, it only causes more pain.

We can all help and pitch in to stop youth violence. We can be everyone's friend. We can be accepting of everyone, and if you feel like you have something rude to say, bite your tongue. You may be a bloody mess by the end of the day, but it'll be worth it. And don't think that you should only stop the bullying and hurtful words and actions to the girl who sits alone at lunch, because bullying isn't just a game of pick and choose. Bullying affects everybody, whether you've personally been bullied or not. Speak up, say something. If you see someone being bullied, don't be a bystander. Step in and stop it. No one deserves to and no one should be bullied for their clothes or because they like a certain TV show. Everyone is different and we need to accept that, we're not cookie cutter. We are all individual with so many little traits and quirks about us, no one is "boring" or "lame". You are all beautiful and loved and important. Stop bullying.

McKinley Helton - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
West Jordan Middle School - Teacher, Stacey Sawyer



## Stop The Crime, Take Your Time.

He goes home & tells his friends "it's okay..." He tells his family "it's okay..." He tells himself "it's okay..." But it's not, he's hurt. He looks in the mirror forced to wear a dress & a smile. The world doesn't accept him for himself, as a guy, but only as a girl. He gets beaten everyday for being "different".

Their words cut like razors, just like the ones he uses on his wrist to numb the pain. They call him names like "dyke", "slut", & "freak". They don't realize the physical, emotional, & mental pain they cause him, they never realize, not 'till it's too late. He's afraid to go home, his family & neighbors don't accept him. They call him a "her" or a "girl", just to hurt him. He's afraid to go to school, they beat him there, push him towards the lockers, shove his head in the toilets, call him vile names, & much more. They hurt him, cause him pain,... so he causes more...he cuts himself, talks badly 'bout his body, & he never smiles.

All for what? All to numb the pain that's what. He comes

home one day, face cut up, bruises all over, a black eye, & the words "dyke" & "freak" written on his arms in sharpie. All 'cause people find him "different", they hurt him, cause him so much pain. He's done, he can't take it anymore. He writes a note then grabs a cord & a chair.

He ties the cord 'round his fan then his neck...he gets on the chair.....he kicks the chair...he's gone now. All for what? All to numb the pain for good that's what. They say "Sticks & stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt". words, the words said near his casket, the kind words, the ones that should've been said back when he was alive. Back when he needed them the most.

He would've like a simple "Hello" but instead he was "greeted" with a swift punch to the face & kick to the stomach. They thought of him as a "freak" 'cause of his gender, sexuality, & choices, they said it defined him as a "bad" or "horrible" person. Even if you or someone you know commits or doesn't commit suicide you never know if they feel the need to. I get suicidal thoughts a lot but I've never

fully wanted to commit suicide, even if life is too hard for me to handle I try to push through it, even if it's not easy. I've lost a best friend to suicide once, it was heart wrenching to find out what happened to him, he felt the need to end his life. I already knew how bad the bullying had gotten & I tried my best to do anything I could do to help him through life, but he still was depressed. Sadly he ended his life & sadly he's never coming back.

Even if you or others think someone is fine they might not be, instead of making their life harder to handle & making the situation worse ask them if they're okay, help them through life, care for them & be there for them. Think of your biological gender, now your preferred gender, think of your sexuality, race, color, & looks. Now ask to feel the person's arm to your right, now to your left. What's something you feel, skin right?

All of these things define you as you, not you as a person. It doesn't matter your biological or preferred gender, sexuality, race, color, or looks. We're all people, no more, no

less. So why hurt & cause someone physical, emotional, or mental pain 'cause of their "flaws"? Their human & so are you, we all are. So stop the violence, your words & actions hurt.

Don't use harsh words or physical violence to solve any problem, talk it out, you can solve it in a non-violent manner. Also, hear me out, suicide is never the answer, even if life is hard & you think it will never get better it will. It always gets better. Maybe not today, tomorrow or the next day, but someday, someday it'll get better, trust me. You may think harming yourself or ending your life takes away the pain but it doesn't, it only causes pain for others.

Why destroy your body that was given to you for living, only to damage it or to be gone? It's never the answer, violence, self harm, & suicide are NEVER the answer. People really do care for you, even if they say they don't. Deep down, somewhere out there, someone or multiple people care for you, whether it's a teacher, family member, or friends, they truly do care for you.

To all those who harm or hurt others, you may have "reasons" that you think or make up to hurt someone but don't do it. Violence towards others is never the answer, even if you feel the need to bully or harm someone or multiple people just DON'T DO IT! If you have to just scream or hit a pillow, punch a punching bag, do anything but bully or harm others. Don't bring your anger or sadness out on people or animals. Be kind, it's not that hard. Being kind will pay off someday, whether it pays off to you or someone else. Don't use violence to solve problems, it only makes the situations worse. Stop the crime, take your time.

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

*Runners Up*

*Bethany Butt*

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

*Moses Stewart*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, North Layton Junior High**  
**Teacher, Melinda Stecklein**

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



## Hiding

Searching for her prey,  
She was a fox on the prowl.  
If there was one person astray,  
She would pounce,  
So I hid.

She found a small child,  
Away from her friends.  
She looked at her. She smiled.  
I knew why,  
So I hid.

Her smile meant danger.  
I was afraid for the girl.  
But I couldn't risk her anger.  
She'd hurt me,  
So I hid.

Her eyes were like coals.  
Her words were like knives.  
She ripped apart souls.  
She broke hearts,  
So I hid.

Like a volcano,  
She bubbled. She boiled.  
I knew she was angry.  
It scared me,  
So I hid.

She preyed on the weak.  
She feasted on fear.  
I was afraid to speak.  
I was scared,  
So I hid.

How could I stop this?  
She frightened my friends.  
I wanted to end it.  
I could not,  
So I hid.

She was bully of the third grade. The girl everyone was afraid of. The person no one wanted to talk to. And she sat right in front of me. Most of the time, she kept to herself, but on the occasion she didn't... it always meant trouble for me.

At recess, her eyes roved the playground, searching for her next prey. She was the master of fixing her victims with her I'm-going-to-kill-you-as-soon-as-no-one-is-looking stare. They would wilt

like dying flowers when she came near them. The smell of fear would fill the air, and as the bully closed in, the victims would gaze at bystanders with desperate, silent pleas in their eyes. It could have been funny, how everyone would suddenly make up wonderful excuses to go to the other side of the playground when she came within five feet, if I hadn't been so petrified of the girl myself.

I did three things. I avoided her, I hid, and I kept my eyes down. Although these methods seemed to work at the time, they were really the farthest thing from the solution to my problems. Hiding from what I was afraid of didn't make it go away.

There was something powerful that I learned from this experience in third grade. What I didn't know that year was that, although the girl seemed to hate everyone, she needed a friend. As time went on, it finally hit me. She was always alone at recess. She didn't have anyone to talk to. And something told me that being alone wasn't the way she liked it.

### **Hiding-Continued**

I could tell  
She was broken inside.  
She was always alone.  
She was trapped in her mind,  
Her pain would not go.  
She needed a friend.  
Her soul was shattered.  
Her despair was a prison.  
No one thought she mattered.  
She needed a friend.  
And while I hid,  
She yearned for a friend.  
While I was afraid,  
She longed for a friend.  
All she needed...  
Was a friend.  
Her thirst for attention  
Consumed her life.  
Her hunger for love  
Slashed her like a knife.  
Her desire for a friend  
Filled her with strife.  
She need a companion  
To help her through trials.  
And where was I?  
I was hiding.  
I hid from what I couldn't  
Know  
See  
Or feel  
She needed a friend.

And what did I do?  
I hid.  
Lonely days  
Turned to weeks  
And months  
And finally years.  
I finally decided--  
What did I need?  
I needed to conquer my fears.  
She didn't scare me.  
She was just a girl.  
A girl--she was like me.  
What did she need?  
She needed a friend.  
A friend--who could be me.  
Fun-filled days  
Turned to weeks  
And months  
And finally years.  
And I got to know the girl  
Who had once caused me fear.  
And now, when I see a girl  
Who looks like she is alone,  
I do not hide. I'm past those days.  
I give her a friend to hold.

Youth violence can be as much a mental pain as it is a physical pain. Many people were affected by the pain of one person in third grade. I felt the fear and misery she felt until I decided to do something to stop it. The simple act of a few sympathetic words made life better for a lot of people, including me.

It is always best to try to kill someone with kindness before you kill them with hatred. We can never truly know what others are going through. Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Knowing what's right doesn't mean much unless you do what's right." Sometimes, the best thing you can do to end problems is to be kind to others. That year, I learned that hiding from your problems will not solve them. Doing the right thing is solving your problems without hatred and anger. I will always reach out and befriend others to stop youth violence.

Moses Stewart – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
North Layton Junior High – Teacher, Melinda Stecklein



## We Shouldn't

Cdc.gov defines youth violence as, “Harmful behaviors that can start early and continue into young adulthood. The young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness to the **violence**. **Youth violence** includes various behaviors.” Growing up, I never heard the term; ‘Youth Violence’. I didn’t even know what it meant. Gangs were always ‘cool’, and fighting earned you a certain amount of respect, as well as protection. Youth violence was looked at as a good thing by me and my community. Nothing bad could ever come out of it. When your dad comes home drunk at a random hour in the night, ready to beat whoever he sees first, he isn’t thinking about the harm youth violence inflicts, but of the fun he is going to have. That’s why youth violence happens. Not because all these people in the world are evil, but because there is not enough awareness about the harm of their actions, and what youth violence can lead to.

My parents don’t make a whole lot. Of what they do make, about \$500 goes towards rent in a month, \$20 dollars towards food, and it’s not uncommon for the rest to be spent in alcohol. At the grocery store, we can get 200 chicken feet for less than \$10. That’s breakfast and dinner for the week. In the winter, when it gets too cold, we can turn on the oven and keep the oven door open to warm the house up. This is how my family, and some of my friend’s, live. I have been in multiple fights. Usually I can pick the right ones to fight, and the right ones to walk away from, although I’m not perfect. I’ve beat a kid unconscious before, and been beaten unconscious. My community struggles with gangs, and I’ve had to see some of the effects of it. There’s always graffiti outside and inside the school, as well as the occasional death. One of my best friend’s cousin was killed in a shooting, and I had to see how it affected him and his family. I’ve always heard stories of late night drive-bys, hence why no one does anything when it gets dark, but it never really hit how violent this was, or how bad the community has been plagued by youth violence. This is bad! I am stuck in a place where I am forced to live out the effects of youth violence, and where no one expects to get away. There isn’t a mindset to stop either, whether it may benefit the person and their community, or not. All I hope is that people will realize what youth violence is, help spread awareness, and know to stop. Because if we don’t, the problem will only get worse.

I believe that we can all help prevent youth violence. The only way to get the problem to stop is to spread awareness, and make people realize that youth violence is not alright. I have seen people weep, because they believe they have nothing left to do with their lives. They don’t think that they have a fighting chance. Many people feel this way. We all have to go out into our communities and physically make a difference. We need to march, propose petitions, and reach out to those struggling the most. Nothing is going to happen unless I, and everyone else, is willing to take initiative, and get the word out. I at least know I have and will continue to.

Youth violence is destructive. How it has affected my life, as well as many others isn't acceptable. I shouldn't wake up, and be nervous about going to school. I shouldn't leave school and have to worry, because I don't know if I will be able to get home without any trouble. I shouldn't be scared to go outside at night, fearing my health. I shouldn't be afraid to walk down the hall with something that may attract attention, because I may be targeted. I shouldn't go to bed, wondering how my life is going to turn out, and no one else should either.

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



# *State Finalists*

*Sabrina Banh*

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

*Ethan Decaria*

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

*Cameron Holman*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Ashley Hauber**

*Davis McBride*

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

*Hope Mendenhall*

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

*Breanna Stewart*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Joel P. Jensen Middle School  
Teacher, Paige Dayley**

*James Sybrowsky*

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

*Harlie Thompson*

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

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



## The Monster Within Us

Violence; the bringer of darkness, hatred, and war. It's what causes the worst of us, our *monsters* to come out. Violence is like a monster that is always stalking us, but there's nothing we can do about it. Even the purest of souls has a monster, waiting to pounce. It always lurks in the back of our minds, whispering of fear and death. Violence can disguise itself, and it almost always does. We meet it every day in its costume, little do we know that it can be changing our course of life forever. Violence can come in many different forms, verbal, physical, emotional, direct, indirect, and so on. I could go on and on about the different types of violence, and that's the sad truth.

**"I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent." -Mahatma Gandhi**

Bullying, teasing, gossiping... **Hatred**. I've experienced it all. Ever since kindergarten I felt trapped, bound, chained. I was like a bird with a broken wing, stuck on the ground. Being bullied or even teased is a horrible feeling, trust me, I know that feeling. Back in elementary school, I met a girl, let's call her Kaci. We carpooled and we were "Best friends"... at least I thought so. I always saw her bullying as just being rude, I always thought she did mean things on accident. It wasn't up until I moved to a new school did I finally realize that she was bullying me. I don't hate her for that. I know that she ***must*** have a reason for her actions, whether it be hardship or bad grades, everything happens for a reason. There was a few points in which I

should've picked up on some hints that she was bullying me but... I was a dumb kid at the time. Some of those "hints" included death threats, friendship threats, physical harm, name calling, and **almost killing** me. I had no idea what was going on at the time, and I was afraid for my life. Although I was dumb, I was apparently very sweet and kind, and I would do anything for a friend. Bullies saw me as an easy target and so I got bullied... a lot. Other kids would pick on me and toss me around like a beach ball, using me in a never ending cycle. It all ended when I moved schools in 4th grade...

*"In violence, we forget who we are." -Mary McCarthy*

The time had finally come, I was changing schools. I was thrilled to move schools and I went on ecstatic. I had high hopes and dreams for my new school, good friends, good grades, good teacher, the whole "shabang". That dream never came true. I was a shy girl back then, I never wanted to draw attention to myself. My experience in my old school changed me; it threw my old personality out for a new, not yet formed, personality. I had nowhere to sit because I didn't know anyone. I was afraid I'd make everything worst. In the end, I sat down in a table group of girls. All of them were nice too so I wasn't intimidated anymore. I trusted these strangers. I trusted them that this year would be a good school year... I was wrong. Eventually, recess came and I decided to go off on my own to meet new people. I saw another girl, let's call her Acanit, on the playground, alone. I approached her because she seemed friendly enough. We were having a good time until I asked what she likes to do in her free

time... what I learned was disgusting. She told me that she liked to read online, when I asked what she liked to read online, I was horrified.

"I like reading about nude camps."

I stared at her, not believing what I was told and asked her again what she read. She repeated herself and just to make sure, I asked what a nude camp was. She explained to me that a "nude camp" was a camp where people go, both boys and girls, and strip naked. Acanit then went on about her hobbies...which I found all of them equally disturbing. The bell rung and we parted ways, I left thinking that I could become friends with her help her out of the ditch that she dug herself in... There was no turning back.

**"I simply can't build my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery, and death I think peace and tranquility will return again." -Anne Frank**

As expected, I became friends with her and yet, it didn't go as expected. I didn't know that she only became friends with me because she wanted to use me... yet again. Within a month since becoming friends with Acanit, she showed her true, *real* colors. She was a mean, perverted girl who cared could care less about everyone else in her life. She only cared about finding a boyfriend, no matter what it took, she didn't care who she hurt in the process, she'd get what she wanted. She used me to get exactly that. She would call me "puppy" and would make me her "cell phone" to "call" her crush. She would make me do everything for her, she didn't care. She would complain all the time about not getting what she wanted. Did she care

about me? Nope. Nada. Nein. She put herself in front of others when it came to everything. She only looked out for herself. I didn't know she was using me, just as I didn't know that things would get a lot worse from then on. She hit me, threatened me, and would tell me nasty things about her personal life. I don't know how, but it got even worse in 5th grade. I left her for a *few* days and she got mad. She started threatening me even more and wouldn't stop. This time, she wouldn't stop treating me like her own personal *slave*. I started going into a deep depression (I had depression ever since 2nd grade) and started self-harm. I always thought about ending it all. I never did. My point is, bullying affected my life by totally changing my personality, it also led me to having long term depression, feelings of worthlessness, and it made it so that it was hard for me to trust people.

**"The hottest place in H@!# is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict." -Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

I believe that what triggers violence, especially in youth, is simple. Bullying. School kids encounter this on a daily basis, whether it be experiencing it, seeing it, or even being the bully. Either way, it's not acceptable. Bullying causes a "snowball" effect, where little things such as teasing, can get bigger and bigger and eventually it could be something *very* serious. For example, a bully might've been bullied before so they bully to release their anger. Then they could go either way, bullying even more and not stopping, or bullying more but stopping after getting in trouble. If they take the first path, bullying nonstop, that would lead their victim into very deep, long term depression, feelings of hopelessness, feelings of sadness and loneliness,

anxiety, trust issues, suicide, and so on. If they take the other path, however, it is likely that their victim will become another bully and they'd be forced to choose which path to follow. It's kind of like a wave. It starts out small, and as it collects more water as it moves, it grows bigger and bigger, until it's finally too big to handle and gets out of control. That wave splits into smaller waves and so on, so forth.

**"If people are trying to bring you down, it only means that you are above them."**

**-Unknown**

We can put a stop to violence and hopefully, one day, we'll be able to eliminate all violence. Schools should enforce the "no bullying" rule and check in on students on a monthly basis to see if everything is alright at home or school. They should have more fundraisers to support people in need, and to show that the school is a friendly environment. Teachers should talk about how important it is to "help each other up". And lastly, the school should have an assembly about how important feelings are and how fragile life is. The government should make a law of no bullying, each year, 34,598 people die by suicide, an average of 94 completed suicides every day. (sourced from <http://www.emorycaresforyou.emory.edu/resources/suicidestatistics.html>) Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year, according to the CDC. For every suicide among young people, there are at least 100 suicide attempts. Over 14 percent of high school students have considered suicide, and almost 7 percent have attempted it from bullying. (taken from <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/bullying-and-suicide.html>)

As for plans for helping other people from bullying, us children can stop it from happening by standing up for each other. We can also think about what we're saying, and what we're going to say. We need to support each other in times of need, who knows? We might even change humanity someday.

**"Hold On, Pain Ends. (HOPE)" -Unknown**

If violence was any thing, my best guess is that it'd be a monster. Monsters can kill, tear people apart, hurt, and so on. But, for those few rare encounters, it can bring people together, give support, and Etc. Violence can be a bad thing, but if we help each other, we can move on and learn from what violence can do.

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



## Resistance

I hate going to school. I'm not a likeable person. It's not that I do anything wrong. It's that I have a large mess of negative traits. I was as handsome as a lump of tar. My hair was too long. It never lay straight. My glasses were always lopsided. My lips were too big and my voice was too high. I was as insecure as a broken safe. People made fun of me. People ignored me and made me feel alone. I felt locked away, forced to watch as everyone else loved and laughed. I felt depressed and destroyed. One day I ran into our friendly-neighborhood-bully-who-was-literally-steaming-with-a-lust-for-blood.

Any students that were there ran. My heart rate rose and my pulse exploded over and over, like a bass drum in my throat. He looked angry. "Let's put a smile on that ugly face." He quipped, smiling at his own retort. Before I could say anything he swung his oversized fist, and hit hard. I felt my nose explode into pain. A hot liquid ran down my face. It felt like every nerve was being stabbed by a white hot knife, over and over and over again. A drum-like throbbing was coming from the back of my head. I realised my head had recoiled and hit the wall behind me. That was no ordinary punch. Black dotted around my eyes and I felt myself passing out. When I woke up I was in the nurse's office surrounded by people. My dad was there. He said something along the lines of "you okay bud." but I couldn't tell for sure. I heard the nurse say something that sounded like "concussion" and "broken nose." Then I fell asleep again.

When I woke up my head felt like there was a drumline playing their loudest number inside it. My nose was throbbing. I was in my own bed at home. I had no energy. I felt like a drained battery. My head hurt too much to move. I managed to sit up enough to look in the mirror. My nose was swollen like a lumpy orange. My eye was dark black with a dash of purple. My lip was split. There was a rather large lump that disrupted the back of my scalp. A tear ran down my eye. All my insecurities were set off at once. I thought of every person I knew and loved, then I pictured them not wanting me, hating me, wanting me to cease to exist.

He was right. I was hideous. Chants filled my skull. A mussy jumble of emotions piled into my head. Mostly it was anger and sadness. Tears began to fall. The salty water stung my split lip. I sobbed into my pillow for what felt like days. I fell asleep in my own puddle of tears. When I woke up I was different. I still felt hopeless but in a different kind of way. I knew bullying would never stop. I knew I would always be a target. But somewhere in my mind a little bubble popped. And out came an idea. I bolted upright in my bed and thought. What if I could hurt him. What if I could destroy him for what he did to me. Thoughts flashed in my head of blood and screams of pain. Then I shuddered. I was jerked back to reality. I wouldn't even if I could. I wasn't going to make the same mistake that he had. I was no villain

I felt a little bit better. Something in my heart changed that day. I felt confidence and I felt proud of who I was. I was no victim. When I next went to school the next day I saw a quote on our quote wall. It was an incredibly simple quote. "Never, never, never give up." -Winston Churchill.

It started something in my heart. A smile flickered onto my face. I may face hardships and I may be bullied. But I will never, never, never give up. There is always a tomorrow. Just because today was bad doesn't mean tomorrow will be too. We have to move forward in life or else we die. We have to dodge the obstacles that stand in our way. And sometimes that obstacle is another human being. And sometimes that obstacle is hard to dodge. But life goes on. You may trip and fall but you get right back up and keep running. I felt violence yesterday. But today I felt peace. I no longer slouch when I walk the halls. I no longer look in the mirror and think "ugly" I changed who I was for the better. I learned from my fall. And now I stand taller than any bully. I will never end bullying in the same way that the world will never end war. Conflict is human nature. But by not joining that conflict, I will be the better man.

## **A Boy Who Walked Small In The World**

**There once was a boy**

**He was mostly ignored.**

**He was stepped on and squashed.**

**People simply did not care.**

**Those who stopped long enough would bully him.**

**They would yell and shout.**

**When they left he would sit there.**

**His deep emerald eyes would waver.**

**Then a single diamond tear ran down his face.**

**Then another and another.**

**He ran and hid from the monsters of the world.**

**In his hiding place he would shed even more tears.**

**He convinced himself that no one loved him.**

**His heart, once gold now sat a dark gloomy mess.**

**His emotions scattered around his mind.**

**When the boy returned he walked even shorter.**

**He was stepped on again and again.**

**He walked shorter and shorter in the world.**

**Soon he was nobody.**

**He was worthless in the eyes of others.**

**People did not even stop to torment him anymore.**

**Resistance is most powerful in many tiny forms.**

**Something the boy never knew.**

Cameron Holman - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Ashley Hauber



## Youth Violence

It doesn't matter the age  
To which children deal with other's rage.  
Even if they start out right  
Or never begin the fight  
They are locked up in a cage.

A cage of unbreakable steel  
Where their captors give them only one meal  
Of mean remarks shoved down their throat  
So surprising that they choke  
What a horrible thing to feel.

And once the unthinkable starts  
Comments thrown at you like darts.  
Your world tips  
Your reality flips  
Ending in shattered pride and broken hearts.

The world that you always knew  
Now something that was never true.  
For others, a playground  
For you, a war ground  
With a hail of mean names being rained down on you.

People don't care what's on the inside  
They judge what's on the outside.  
Then they say what they think  
And your face turns all pink  
And you thought about it as you cried.

This violence might never go away  
But we can not let it stay  
We can spread the word  
So that everyone's heard  
That it needs to be stopped today.

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



## Bystander

It's a typical day and you are walking down the hall. You look to your right. People are whispering and snickering, staring at you. You continue walking down the hall, and right before you reach the safety of a teacher's classroom, you are tripped and everyone is laughing at you. Your stomach drops with embarrassment as people watch you and call you names. This is what it is like to be bullied. This is what it feels like all day when your life is a living hell.

Kids around the country are facing bullying problems every day at school. So you think, I'm not the one calling them names or smashing them into lockers, so I am not the bully. But you didn't try to stop the people that did. Does that make you the bully? Just because you didn't hurt them or laugh, doesn't mean you aren't the bully. You could have told an adult. Made it go away a little bit. Made their hell a bit less horrific.

You walk into the lunchroom and it's the same thought as always, *get my lunch and go sit away from everyone so I don't get picked on*. You go and sit in the corner of the cafeteria. *If only someone would sit by me...* You continue to eat your lunch. A few people throw food at you. Then someone walking by stops right in front of you. They stare at you. *Could this be true? Is someone finally going to sit by me?* They snicker and shake their head and continue walking. Your heart sinks and the bell rings.

If you spared one minute to go ask them how their day was going, they would feel amazing. If you invited them to sit with you at lunch and be their friend, they would feel as if they were lifted out of the day to day horrors because they feel that somebody cared. It would make them forget about the worthlessness, pain, and embarrassment they have always known. So next time you see someone being bullied, go ask them how they are doing. Stop being rude by doing nothing. Start helping their hell become a little less hot.

Bullying is a serious problem that can lead to things as serious as suicide. There are kids who live in fear of going to school, just because of bullying. I cannot stress how terrible bullying is. I am sad to say I speak from experience. I know what it's like to have no friends and to hurry away from people to not be embarrassed. My mom had a lot of the same problems when she was a kid. Every day she tells me, "Go find someone who has no one to sit with at lunch today and sit with them," or "Say hi to someone new today."

Whenever I see cases of bullying the first thing that comes to my mind, is *why?* Just because you are too short, too tall, too fat, too skinny, don't have as nice of nice things, in no way give one person a right to talk down upon, think they are better or even bully them. It doesn't matter a person's race, ethnicity, race, social status, we are all the same on the inside. We all have feelings, ideas, and beliefs, all of which should be respected regardless of how different they are. On the inside we are all human beings, all equals. We all have the right to say what we want, act how we want, and believe what we want. We shouldn't be respected for what we believe or what we can or have done. We should be respected and looked at as equal because we are human beings.

If someone lived their whole life being different from everyone else and ends up thinking that they are terrible and wrong because of it, they will live forever thinking they are inadequate, that they don't meet the right standards. That they need to change to be equal. But this is wrong. We need to treat everyone as an equal. We should let anyone be our friends, eat with us at lunch, or even just talk to us. I know of kids who have a "high social status", or are "popular", that think just because of it you are inferior to them. They think you are not "good enough" to be friends with them, just because they are "popular" and you are not.

We need to bridge that social gap, accept everyone to be our friends regardless of how different they are. If every kid that didn't have friends were to have a few people talk to them for just a second, that will make them a whole lot better. It doesn't matter who you are, what you believe, how "popular" you are, you need to stand up for that kid,

be his friend, talk to them, it doesn't matter just put yourself in his shoes and think, how can I make his hell a little less hot?

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



## It Affects Everyone

What is violence? To me violence is consistently making someone feel like less than they are. Violence looks like someone crying and alone. Violence sounds like a heart pounding. Violence feels like every door is shut and you can't get out and you're alone and scared and that no one in the world cares. Violence scares, hurts and kills people. "At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love. "-Martin Luther King Jr. Violence affects everyone. It affects me, maybe not personally but it affects everyone.

A bunch of girls including myself were sitting around the fire when one of my closest friends started walking away heading towards the bathroom. I followed her to the bathroom and asked her what was wrong. She told me that one of the girls was giving her the shady eye and the cold shoulder and that she was getting mad at her for no reason. She then continued to tell me about how she was bullied in elementary school and that what this girl was doing reminded her of it. She told me that it started in first grade and went all through elementary school. She said that she would be playing on the playground and this girl would come up to her and start saying rude things to her, punch, and kick her. All of the sudden her eyes started tearing up as she started telling me this. I gave her a hug and told her that everything was gonna be ok as my eyes started to tear up as well. In my mind I could not believe that someone especially a first grader would do this to such a special and wonderful girl. I mean you picture first graders as such sweet little innocent kids. I have a younger sister who is in first grade

and I could never picture her doing something like this to someone or someone doing it to her.

After hugging and talking in the bathroom for awhile we walked outside and I suggested that we sit here for awhile. She agreed and told me she didn't want to go back to the camp anyway. As we sat there she continued to tell me about how she was bullied. As we sat there she began to cry. As she told me all these terrible things that happened to her. I began to cry. She told me that she would beg her teachers to not let her go outside, so she wouldn't see this girl. As she told me this I tried to comfort her. When I first met her I could tell she was a strong independent women, but that night I had seen a different side of her. She told me that she has never been the same since that experience. She is the most beautiful girl and you would never guess that she had been bullied like this.

Why would anyone do this to someone else? I think it's from anger, jealousy, media, being abused at home, poor parenting. In my ELA class we read stories of kids and teenagers who would kill other kids and teens for a pair of shoes. Some people if there really angry will just flip out at people and not realize what they're doing. Every day kids are on the media myself included. And every once in awhile a violent commercial will pop up for a violent video game. Some kids play violent video games and it will sometimes mess with their brains. If someone is being abused at home they'll feel like they're trapped in a hole and can't get out, and will sometimes take it out on other people. If someone has poor parenting there kid could learn from a young age and start to mimic their parents bad behavior. Violence could even come from a

siblings. Most of the time when siblings fight it's just teasing, but sometimes it can change to something more, bullying.

What can we do? This seems like this has been an ongoing problem forever. There has violence throughout history. But let's be the generation to change that. Start clubs against violence. Talk to your family, friends, neighbors, and other students. If you see someone getting bullied don't be a bystander. Stand up for what's right. You can invite people into your group of friends. Be extra nice to that shy person in your class. Violence is a problem, but we can fix it. Let's be the generation that eliminates violence.

Violence is making someone feel like less than they are. Violence is someone alone and feeling like a nobody and saying to themselves that they're not good enough. Violence sounds like a heart pounding in the dark. Violence feels like you're locked in a room and no one cares for you. Violence affects everyone. It can make you feel terrible and lonely and scared. Violence is everywhere in the world. There are wars and terrorists everywhere. The world would be so much different if youth weren't affected by it. Everyone would feel included and not separated. People would feel free and not trapped if violence was gone. I can reduce violence by saying hi to people in the hall who look alone. Or inviting someone to come sit by me at lunch. Or even just asking that shy person in my class to be my partner on an assignment. Violence affects everyone, but we can change that.

**Breanna Stewart - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Joel P. Jensen Middle School - Teacher, Paige Dayley**



“Don’t talk to them,” She said as me and my two friends watched her. “They’re to Mormon.” As she and her group walked away, my mind was seething with anger.

I’d had enough of her tormenting comments and unfair judgement. I wasn’t the only one getting hurt anymore, and I didn’t like that. Telling people to ignore us and cast us aside just because of our religion was just plain wrong, and I wouldn’t tolerate it any longer.

After summer had ended, everyone went back to school and I started fifth grade. The crisp air of autumn already making its approach. There was a new girl who moved in down the street from me. I decided that she wouldn’t be too big of an issue, since she seemed really shy and timid the first week of school. It wasn’t terrible the first half of the school year, she only gave snide remarks that weren’t about me that I decided to ignore.

It only started getting bad toward the end of the school year when she started making comments about me. She pointed out my acne and asked what was wrong with my face, she even said mean things to my younger sister. She forced me into participate in a movie she was making, along with a lot of my other friends. None of us wanted to join, but none of us said anything. I never liked speaking up for myself or others since I was to shy and nice to turn anyone down. Usually I give into to peer pressure, even if I’m really against what they are doing, whether it’s just doing a play, or breaking some kind of rule. I try not to give in and insist against my participation, but I feel like I’m a tiny mouse being stared down by a cat and one wrong move could be the end of me. Sometimes, the cat is one of my friends, and like the tiny mouse I’ve been given the role of, I give in and let them take control of my actions. I’ve been getting better about not giving in, but it’s hard to do when it’s people you trust.

Eventually, when the girl shunned me and my friends because of our religion, I finally decided it was time to tell the teacher. She had me write a paper on everything she did, then had a talk with her. It didn’t really help much, and the girl continued to bully others, but stayed away from me and my friends for the rest of the year.

The bullying started again with another girl, but this time it was directed towards my best friend. It was the end of the school year when the weather was getting rapidly warmer, and her mom had just died. One girl kept saying that this was all just a prank that she was pulling and telling us that her mom died was just so that she could get a lot of attention. This made me mad, especially since my friend doesn’t have the best living conditions, and was already bullied before then because her parents were lesbians. It made me sick to think that she was being bullied because her mom died, and people were saying she was an attention hog.

The other girl started bullying us again in sixth grade, calling some of my friends ugly and talking behind people’s backs. I decided that I would talk to my mom about what I should do, since she had experience with bullies. She said to ignore her, that

everything she said should just roll off my back like water on a duck's. Ever since then I've held my head high and never believed what other people said about me was true.

My best friend is still having bullying issues, and she's said she doesn't want to go to school anymore because of it. Ever since I moved, it's gotten worse and I haven't been there to help her.

Youth violence is not okay, and it usually starts at home. It might be living conditions, or domestic abuse, or the relationships between family members. The girl that bullied us the most had bad living conditions and only lived with her mother and grandmother in a small rental house. The other girl's parents were divorced and she didn't have many supportive friends. Neither of them hung out with good people.

Youth violence starts out as a tiny spark, like a match that can be put out, but the more it's exposed to other violent things, the spark grows into a flame and it gets harder to extinguish. I'm not saying it's impossible to stop someone who has been consumed by youth violence, but it is harder to get them out of their bad habits.

We need to end this. My best friend has put her word out there that bullying is not okay and it isn't fun to be picked on, so I will too. It takes a lot of courage to stand up for what you believe in. The world and the people around you will judge you, but it needs to be said. Take a stand against bullying, whether it be making an anti-bullying campaign, or trying to befriend someone affected by youth violence, you need to do something. If you see someone being bullied anywhere, but you don't want to be hurt, you can go tell a counselor or principal anonymously so that the bully won't know that you're the one who told on them. Violence won't solve violence, but being a friend can. Helping someone through their hard times and giving them your support is one of the most effective ways to eradicate bullying.

If you see someone doing bad things, that doesn't mean that they're a bad person, they've just had a hard life and need help. "I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart," -Anne Frank.

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



Violence is the action of intentionally harming or hurting another being or object. Violence can look like punching, fighting, or it can just be an angry look. It may sound like fire, but it could be a whisper, a silent knife digging into your soul. It feels like raw terror, a rain of hate. But it can feel, in a sick evil way, just right. That is what is driving young people to violence. That flickering flame of anger, revenge, malice. You might say, why would anyone feel like this? There are many reasons one might feel this way. It could be bullying, for example. Think about a time someone has made you feel bad about yourself, I know it's happened. Think hard, remember every detail of the experience. Do you feel that anger? Although you might deny it, inside you all you want is to fight back. There are some people who just can't resist this temptation. Bullying is not the only way someone could be driven to violence. It can be caused by jealousy, unfair treatment, one's possession of an object, and many more.

Violence has affected us all in one way or another. It has deeply affected me and my brothers and our relationships. I have two younger brothers, and all three of us can be pretty mean. I'm not really sure why something so small can create an argument. We have constant fights about stupid things. I'm not trying to say that we hate each other. We are actually very close. But right there is an example of how violence can overtake you. We have become so comfortable to fighting with each other that it has just become regular. I am going to share a story with you. This happened when I was only 8 years old (even the very young are affected!) The consequences I received for this were not worth the fighting! So here we go: It had just snowed at Lincoln Elementary. It was a beautiful white blanket. A COLD blanket. In Iowa, we had recess every day, and today it was in the negatives. Me and two of my friends were enjoying the snow, when we saw the snow by the fence. Now there was snow everywhere, up to my knees. But the snow by the fence... that was the BEST snow. It didn't get better than that. So me, a second grader, happily skipped over there with my friends and hopped onto the snow.

But I should've known I wasn't gonna get there easily. This kid, Miles was his name, he and his buddies had taken the snow. "Hey, this is our snow!" he said. "But look!" I said. "There's tons of room for us! WHY can't we get on?" My friends stepped forward. "LET US ON THE SNOW." My friend John said. I don't really remember what happened after that. I remember Miles and his friends calling us names and insulting us. Now in second grade, I was no easy-going guy. I wasn't gonna let some loser insult me! And then I felt it... the flame... it grew stronger inside me as they laughed and mocked us. I walked up to Miles and stared him in the eyes. Confused, we both said nothing. And then the flame exploded. I slammed my fist into his face and he tumbled back into the fence. Shocked, nobody moved. And then Miles screamed... the fight had begun. The group charged at us, and within a few seconds it was a free-for-all. There was a storm of fists flying. It didn't take long for other people to notice. If some innocent person happened to walk in, they were dragged into battle. In 5 minutes, numbers increased by like 10 people. By then nobody even knew what side they were on. I remember terrible images. Of me holding a kid to the fence, beating him. He couldn't escape. This fight went on for three days, as the snow slowly turned red. And every day more people came. I vaguely remember the last day... the ultimate showdown. As chaos erupted around us, I stood face-to-face with Miles. I could see he was ready to throw something, and I wasn't going to let that happen. I punched him with all my might, knocking him back into the pink snow. I was on top of him, ruthlessly punching him in the face. He cried out, but I had had enough. Blood poured out his nose, and I was pulled off of him by his friends. I jumped in the air and stared... stared at the mess I had created. All of this pain and sadness, all because of me. I fell in the snow and cried. I remember, the recess aids carrying us all away. Little kids stared in shock at the incident. They didn't know what to make of it. And the flame inside me washed away. And then my eyes opened. We had beaten these kids hard. And then I truly realized what needed to be done. All throughout the suspension that

EVERYONE had received, I couldn't help but think about the incident. Because of me, around 20 kids... 20 KIDS had been injured and suspended. Because of me...

Youth can be so easily caught up in violence. And for mostly dumb reasons, like I said, the snow. There are countless ways kids could be caught in violence. It usually has something to do with another person, or revenge on them. At least for me that's how it works. Kids can be easily angered, I know that for a fact. I will freak at something that bugs me even if it is small. That quickly leads to violence. But sometimes innocent people can be caught into violence, like the kids in my story who wandered into the fight and got beat up. Recently, our table put together a chart for the top five causes of youth violence. We came up with 1. Stress 2. Bullying 3. drugs/alcohol 4. Peer pressure 5 Jealousy. You might think that none of these will affect you. But as your life goes on, it will! Getting caught up in violence will happen to everyone at least once in your life. However, it is possible to avoid it.

So what can we do to prevent youth violence? Well here's a start. Youth violence won't stop unless YOU do something. If you are a violent person you will never make a difference, and violence will rage on around you. If you have any friends or family that are acting aggressively, talk to them, try to make them feel good. If you can make a stand reduce the violence, that will spread, and it could create a chain of kindness. I can prevent violence by giving a hand to anyone in need, to someone who needs help, to someone who is less fortunate than me. I can stand out by holding in my temper and to never let violence leak out. If one person is violent, it can also create a chain. But we do not want this chain of hate and anger. When one person is angry, it makes everyone around them sad and angry, thus making everyone mad. It is sad to know that the chain of violence is stronger than the chain of kindness. But it doesn't have to be this way! All you have to do is put your hand out to someone sad or angry. Do your best to keep the flame out. If all of our schools did this... imagine the happiness!

Nobody would be without friends, and everyone would have a good time! All you have to do is reach out to someone. If all of our schools, neighborhoods, and communities did this, well, just think! No violence at all! If it got to the whole country, it could affect the world, then that's it! Problem solved!.

Violence is the most terrible thing in existence. It drives us mad, and gives us a want to inflict pain and destruction upon everything around us. It is the heat you feel when a sibling ruins your favorite shirt. It is the hate you feel when your friend leaves you to run off with another friend. It is those simple things that make you mad that drive kids to violence. It is in our schools, our work, our homes... just the most simple things. Take for example the shootings at that high school. A 16 year old boy was shot in the head. Do you know why that happened? They were fighting over a girl. A GIRL! That shows how simple these acts can be. There was also a stabbing at a high school, for no apparent reason at all. Like I said, if there was no violence, the world would be a different place. I will reduce violence by being kind and open to others and never having any outbursts of anger. If everyone does the same, The world would be a much happier place. Of course, there will always be some people that will never let kindness overtake them. Violence will never be eliminated, but that doesn't mean we need to stop trying. I hope after reading this you feel different about the world and the people around you, and changed your views on violence. Stay strong, and never let the fire overtake you!

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



Violence and youth violence can be found anywhere and everywhere. Fights in schools might break out like wild fires in a field of dead grass because of things that people have done. We might as well all be ticking time bombs. It is a very real thing. Google classifies youth violence as “harmful behaviors that can start early and continue into young adulthood. The young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness to the violence”. Now you may assume that youth violence is physical. That it’s punching and hitting someone because of a series of events. Is that really all it is? No. Youth violence comes in many forms. I personally see it in three different ways. The first way is the cliché physical violence that everyone expects to happen when talking about youth violence. The second way is mental. This could be cyberbullying or words that are said to someone. This is a very dangerous type of youth violence because most people don’t even know that it’s happening to their child. The third and final way that I categorize youth violence is “slow and painful”. Sure I could just put both physical and mental violence in this category but that’s not how I see it.

I’m sure everyone has been bullied or has known someone who has been bullied. But what we may not know is there are kids and teens who might not even be the victims of bullying but they still get greatly affected by it. I know this from experience.

I was in third grade when I first learned about how much I could be affected by others decisions. My brother was in fifth grade when it all started. He had a certain hat that was home-made that he loved to wear everyday. This hat happened to have a dragon-like creature called Godzilla on it. He thought it was the coolest hat in the world, so he wore it everyday. Most people thought it was pretty cool too. Except a certain friend who wasn’t afraid to speak his mind. Everyday this “friend” would steal his hat before the bus came to pick me and my brother up. He would throw the hat into a large ditch and keep it from him for a long time. Almost everyday he would be bullied by someone who happened to have a big ego and no heart. His “friend” didn’t realize that he was honestly hurting my brother.

Now you have to understand that my brother was somewhat shy. Therefore he didn’t ever tell any adults about any of it. But I could tell he was hurting. So I decided to tell a teacher. I told my third grade teacher who knew my brother pretty well because he was also in her class. Eventually the teasing and bullying stopped. But to this day my brother still has the horrid memories of this jerk kid who teases him *everyday*. I was the only one who did anything.

Who knows what would’ve happened if I didn’t.

Bullying and youth violence disgusts me. How could someone think that they’re so much better than someone that they have the right to point out *every* flaw. This *can* be stopped.

Classroom exercises to express feeling and grow closer to your peers is a great idea. We can all grow stronger together.

Simple things like being assigned someone to write a nice letter to could help so much. I think students should choose a name or be assigned a student to focus on for that week. In that week they can write letters to, talk to, and more importantly *listen* to the other student they choose or are assigned. This could help students bond and become better friends with their whole class. Everyone needs a friend. And maybe if we do something like this we can *truly* make a difference. Everyone has to face trials and struggles, so we should try to help them.

Another idea that I had was to have "meet days". Days in school where you sit by someone new and talk to them. You could play games and do other fun things. Anything will help someone. It's not easy to impact a child's life, but it is easier to at least try.

Together we can cure the world of its inner demons.

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



*Honorable Mention*

*Nathan Estes*

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

*Noah Fewkes*

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

*Carissa Henson*

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

*Tyler Macievic*

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

*Emma Madsen*

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

*Ashtyon Neal*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Wahlquist Junior High School  
Teacher, Ann Tippets**

*Lorren Weller*

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

*Samuel Ziemski*

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

Nathan Estes - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Brandee Burgum



# Today

Today many kids are sitting all alone;  
Sitting and crying because of things that they have known.  
Things that have affected them in ways they cannot tell.

Their emotions are under attack  
Because of things that they lack.  
Things like good hair, lots of love,  
Or maybe the things that fly like a dove.

The things they suffer are many things,  
But fall under these words:  
Bullying. Teasing.  
They see the world through a blurred lense,  
Because of the emotions these words bring.

A lense that tells them the world is out to get them.  
That the world does not care about or for them.  
It makes them wish they were someone else.  
Their emotions turn inside out and complex.

These things are youth violence, and it happens every day.

They make those kids who are different,  
It really makes them really sad.  
It makes them wish they had  
The joy of having friends.

Like a flower, that has gotten picked and stomped on,  
They have become feeble, and do not think that this will ever, ever stop.

I myself have felt this way.  
it happened on that fateful day.  
Getting called lesser,  
Not good enough,  
To smart and nerdy to play with us.

I understand the way it makes us feel,  
The way that it is not ideal.  
It makes us feel sympathy, for real,  
And makes us want to help, today.

It has scarred me, something I will never forget.  
It has made me hard to befriend,  
And I was a recluse for a long, long time.  
It made it difficult to contend,  
especially at schooltime.

Today, one person decides to bully another.

The bully, too, feels alone and afraid.  
Their self esteem is swayed,  
But they too have a life hidden behind a curtain.  
One that is the cause of their uncertain life.

They might, at home, be abused, or maybe even hurt  
Feeling left alone and unwanted.  
So they then want to take it out on someone else.  
Today, they get hurt.

Today, they take it out on someone else.

Or, they might have been a victim at one point,  
Been bruised by words,  
Aching at every joint.  
They they needed escape, so they went to bullying to that escape.

Today, one more person turns to violence.

But, there is hope.

We can stop those who bully.  
Who step on the flower, that make it flat and droopy.  
We can talk to them, find out about their hidden life,  
And allow them to flourish, as a flower does in the sun.

We can help the victim, the stomped on flower,  
And help them find the sun.  
The sun allows them to regenerate and flourish,  
Just like every flower should,

Today, the sun will come up, and will give you strength.

Even when winter may come,

And you lose hope because of the dreary circumstances,  
Spring will shortly come, and you will be able to full bloom,  
Making your pedals spread.

Then you flourish, and after awhile, it starts to turn cold,  
But the sun will always be there.  
No matter what, they loyal sun,  
Will help you through, until the next spring, where you will flourish.

Just like the seasons, the light, the friend, the help,  
It Will COME.

I am not saying that life will be always bright and easy,  
But there will always be that one light, to bring light to your dark and dreary life.

Today, they will come.

So, what can we do as bystanders?  
We can be that candle, which lights the way for others.  
We can be the lighthouse that guides the ship safely home in the midst of a storm  
WE can be that friend, that helps them through.  
Never stand by.  
Always, even TODAY, be that hope for another.

Today, we will take action.

Today, we will turn the storm to sunshine.

Today, we will turn even the bitterest of winters in spring.

Today, we will make a difference.

Today, we will stand up and help others.

Today, we will stand up for ourselves, and help,  
even those who antagonized us for so long.

Today, we will start to grow.

Today, we will provide light in the darkest of days.

Today, we will lower the amount of youth violence.  
Today.

Today we will change the world,  
As thousands of youth around the world will start to grow.

Just like a greenhouse, we all live together.  
Flies may buzz around and bit and hurt us,  
But we will still grow.  
Because the sun is steady.  
Others help, give us light.  
We will still grow.

Today, we will help those flies turn into butterflies.

Today, we will stop youth violence.

Today, we will let those who struggle flourish.

Today is a new day.

Today we will end youth violence.

Noah Fewkes - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Spanish Fork Junior High - Teacher, Jonathan Lawrence



## Do the write thing

Youth violence has been around for ever my dad grew up in california and was around gang activity and fights breaking out all the time, in Utah things aren't terrible but youth violence still goes on these are my ideas on how we can change it. Its affected my life in the way that you have to check who you are around and make sure that you're where you're supposed to be and not around other kids who might cause problems. In the summertime this year me and my friends were hanging out at a carnival and four seniors on the football team walked up to us and threatened to beat us up for rumors they had heard. Im in 8th grade and there is absolutely nothing I can do in a situation like that than try to be nice and talk it out. Things like this don't happen often our school is very good at bullying and not many fights start. It's not affected my life too much it's usually just an annoyance but it still goes on and happens to other kids.

I feel like most youth violence starts from texting or social media drama and it leads up to these events. It's easier than ever for a rumour to spread around with new technology at our fingertips and being able to contact almost anyone instantly. Through this rumours get spread and stretched out and faker than they already were this leads to people having bad information and when you hear things like this you make irrational choices that lead to youth violence. I feel like most youth violence just happens because people don't actually talk things out and figure out the truth if this were to happen i feel most youth violence would not happen. I feel like teenage boys are the most irrational people out of anyone. I've been there and done it myself we act out of pressure, or nervousness and we just act before we think we hear a thing that we don't like and we instantly act without thinking about the consequences. And it's really not our fault it's kind of

how we are in a way and it's so easy with all this technology at our fingertips we can contact nearly anyone and say whatever we want and it makes it too easy for these irrational decisions to be made.

It's hard to stop youth violence considering the fact that most of it doesn't happen around you and you can't know everything that happens. One thing I think you should always do is if it's happening on school grounds you immediately need to go to the administration, if it's off of school grounds than you need to tell the cops. Fighting is a serious thing and it is illegal at any age and you can get in a ton of trouble. I think the most we can do is if it is happening around us try to break it up and call the police, and do your best to prevent it in the first place. Another thing is even if it's just a rumor you hear you should tell someone cause if it does happen stopping it could help a kid out and if it doesn't at least your doing the right thing. I think the schools should have a assembly or a lesson or something on this, I genuinely feel that if you talk things out no fights would ever happen most wars would be avoided and so many lives saved. I think we should explain to the kids that if we talk things out we can avoid anyone being hurt, instead of just trying to prevent it or just postpone it for another time we can talk it out and maybe make a friend through it.

Carissa Henson - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Kimberly Carter



# My Experience With Bullying

Violence consists of an Attacker and a Victim. The Victim is then hurt physically or mentally. Violence looks like someone saying mean things or hitting, punching, kicking, or shoving someone else. Violence sounds like silence as in people who see it happen are silent and keep moving on or in the way that the victim does not want to talk to anyone about it. Violence feels like tears running down your face or the pulsing of a bruise. I have two classifications of violence, Mental, Physical. " We are effectively destroying ourselves by violence masquerading as Love" ~ Dave Laing.

Violence has affected my life in so many ways that I can't even count them. Well for one I have had so many people criticize me and mentally hurt me. My parents have argued my whole life and severely injured themselves mentally. I have also had so much experience in so many places and so many times that I can't even remember. So when I was a small child I lived in the apartment of my Grandmother's basement. My parents would argue and I would then start to cry so my aunt would come and take me to somewhere quiet. When we moved and I got older, I made myself a few friends. One of which told me that if I was friends with two certain girls that he would stop being friend. So I just stopped hanging out with all of them. Now even I get bullied close to everyday. I went on a new website to post my art and didn't know how to do everything. Eventually the people that I used bases for and others started to say mean things and do rude things. I then was extremely depressed. I have also been bullied for the fact that I don't believe the same thing the person doing believes. I am also bullied daily by certain teachers and peers about my sense in style, music, art, and what I like to believe. I have even started putting myself down for what these other people say. I have been depressed for a very long time and I ran away from home at one point to just stop my family and school from bullying me. After that it all just got worse, the bullying continued. Eventually I just decided to try to take my life, to end all of the pain I feel each and every day.

Youth violence is normally caused by abusive parents, loss of confidence, or the fact that they don't have a good life. Most of the time abusive parents and loss of confidence in themselves are what cause violence between two or more people. For some they might just be jealous of you for some reason. I myself am bullied because I am an easy target and don't have very much confidence to begin with. For many others they are bullied for the same reasons. I believe that the people who get caught up in violence are just trapped in a bubble of hate and misery and they believe that if they do that to someone else they will escape the torment. So many people have a hard time coping with people better than them so they hurt them. I myself could be hurting people to bring myself up but instead I show a smile or am kind to them.

I can prevent youth violence by smiling at people and being nice. The community can prevent youth violence by giving kids good homes. They can talk to the children that look

troubled. We together can stop violence by working with these troubled people and taking good care of them. Our school can really help, most bullying happens inside of school walls. Some things our school can do, have everyone at the school go to the counselors every two months just to talk about bullying and problems the person is having. Our city can enforce kindness and/or have a day two talk to your children alone, about their bullying problems or of their random problems. Our country can help the most, the government can make a few days of every year to take off and just talk to their children. I personally can show everyone a smile even if I am not truly happy. These things can truly help our community to grow strong and healthy.

Violence is a fight between two people specifically the attacker and the victim. Violence affects us all as individuals because it happens every day nearly every where. Some people are bystanders and that is how they are involved while their are people who are the victims. Violence affects communities and cities very harshly, for example violence is an everyday problem for the police. If youth violence was eliminated the world would be basically a peaceful place for all to enjoy. I can help reduce violence by showing a smile.

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



## The Monster

Violence. What exactly is violence? The dictionary's definition of violence is "Behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something." Is violence always physical though? Or can it hurt someone with words? I like to describe violence as what hurts people, either physically, or mentally. Violence has affected people for as long as they have been around, and sadly, it is something that youth suffer from. There are many ways youth are affected by this terrible thing, this monster that doesn't leave people alone, no matter if they deserve it or not. We hear about violence everywhere, on the news, at school, on movies or video games, and some people even experience it at home. This monster comes in all shapes and sizes. No matter where we are, violence affects our lives, and the things we do.

The thing about violence is that everyone has experienced it. We have either been on the painful side where we might have gotten made fun of, or physically been hurt. We might have been the one hurting other people, or the one watching it. No matter what side we are on no one wants to experience it. I have been lucky enough to not have to experience these painful things much, but so many people have, and this is something that we can't just ignore, or act like it's not their.

This painful thing affects our daily lives whether we realize it or not. You might be thinking that that is wrong, and that your life is free of violence, but what makes you lock your doors at night? What causes us to go through security when going on an airplane, or in a concert? Why are we afraid to maybe go downtown alone, or go alone to a different country? The reason for every single one of those things is one word. It is the thing that hurts people the most, the monster that preys on the weak. This thing is violence. We lock our doors for the fear of someone taking things or harming us in our own home. We go through security because there have been many occasions of people getting weapons onto planes and into concerts, and the things that people do with those weapons is terrible.

There are many causes for people to unleash this monster inside of them, but I am going to mostly focus on what causes youth to free the monster. There are many reasons for this. Some people blame the violent video games and movies of this generation. Some might blame the parents of the kids. Others will blame their school situation or drugs. I think all of these reason can affect someone's thoughts and emotions. These are the things that make a kid sad, or feel like it's okay to hurt other people. These things connect in way, and a lot of them go down to one thing, their parents. If kids play the violent video games at a young age, then it could be described as the parents fault. If they get drugs, then maybe the parents could have helped them. The truth is that some parents just aren't around as much to set that example. Some go to work, and sadly, some might just neglect their kids. You have probably heard stories of kids being abused by their parents. It is a terrible thing to do or even hear about, but that can affect a kid in a huge way. It could either make them think that that's an okay thing to do to people, or it could make them not want anyone else to go through the pain they went through. Sadly, some people pick the first one. They live up in that horrific environment and end up thinking in violent ways. Another big reason for violence is other kids. If someone gets bullied every day, do you think that they are going to enjoy life? No. They are going to feel sad, and hopeless. They might even want to end their life. Some might do the same thing to other people to try and make themselves feel better, Others might handle the situation in a different way, they might try to make sure that no one else goes through the pain they felt. As you can see violence among youth can affect their whole lives, and ruin it.

Violence is an issue that we can't just all of the sudden make it go away, but there are ways that we can try. If you see someone getting bullied, just stick up for them or tell an adult. Don't start fighting the bully. Michael Franti said, "We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can't bomb it into peace." Violence is not the answer to stop violence. You have probably heard the saying, fight fire with fire, No, you don't fight fire with fire, that'll only make the fire worse. You want to fight fire with water. Water can represent peace, fire represents violence. You need to dump that piece all over the

violence to put it out. I am lucky enough that I don't see big fights at my school, but what I do see is kids occasionally saying rude, hurtful things to other kids. Whenever I see that I just tell kid being rude to stop, usually that's all it takes. It just takes one kid to simply say stop, that's wrong, or if things are too serious tell an adult. I also think that schools could talk more about bullying, maybe even have an assembly about it. I think that if a school did that then it would bring more awareness about it to the students in that school. To bring awareness to the violence that drugs cause, my school has a week about being drug free. Another way that violence affects youth is suicide. I just had a suicide unit in health, and we talked about what to do if someone you know is thinking about suicide. If someone tells you about them wanting their lives to end, then you need to tell a trusted adult, no matter what your friend might say. I would suggest a school counselor. Then the counselor will be able to help. We won't be able to fully eliminate violence. The monster is inside of everyone, waiting to come out, but we can hide that monster, and help other people to hide it too. I hope that with this we can help slow down violence and eliminate it in some situation.

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



A child's first day of school  
It's an exciting time  
Parent and child wondering if the kids will be cool  
Or cruel

But one thing is clear,  
Some parents are filled with many fears  
Fears that they hope won't ever come true  
But of course, at one point, they do.

They know at one point that their child will doubt,  
That no matter what others say, that their parents are proud.  
That they to the parents are so very special,  
But at one point, this information seems confidential.

At one point, others will attack their child  
Making them think that anybody who has love for them has it less than mild,  
And that their very purpose on this earth  
Is for others to make them feel like dirt.

Then at this point the child starts to believe  
That this is exactly who they are supposed to be  
That they are as small and insignificant as  
A lonely, singular, blade of grass.

I know for a fact that I'm not the only child  
Who grew up with other kids standing idle  
While others made them look and feel like fools  
And all adults could say was, "Kids can be cruel".

I know you think that this is an exaggeration,  
But let me tell you the exact information.  
I was a little girl, bright and delightful  
Wanting in on a world, where apparently, she was not welcome.

I was always different from girls my age  
Wanting nothing to do with dolls and perfumes that smelled of sage,  
There was a place I always wanted to be accepted,  
The place they played army and football, but of course, I was rejected.

Both boys and girls decided that  
I was never to be where the "cool kids" were at.  
And that I should be given a daily greeting,

Of a punch or kick, the two always switching.

This was so I could never anticipate  
Where the blow was going to be aimed at  
I tried to avoid it, believe me, I did  
But they never did seem to quit.

And this was happening from my FIRST days of school,  
So I did not know these kids were cruel.  
I did not know the difference between good and bad.  
And this is why my tale ended up being so sad.

My parents couldn't have ever known  
For never did it on my report card show,  
And every day I came home with a smile  
For it was nice to feel safe for a while.

At one point, I was done with feeling lonely.  
I was just tired of feeling trashed and homely.  
But I was suddenly terrified of ending my strife,  
For one had made a threat on my life...

This would have been where my sad tale ended  
If someone hadn't spoke up, and been my friend.  
Just by saying something, he made it all go away  
And that is the only reason why I'm alive and happy today.

I know I'm not the only one  
Who grew up just wanting someone, anyone  
To come and help them see the sun  
But sadly, I was one of the lucky ones.

Most of us don't get a second chance,  
Most of us feeling completely unbalanced  
Just trying to find some sort of stability,  
Never getting the chance to feel tranquillity.

Do not ignore it, because it's true,  
And only thing stopping it from getting better is you.  
All you have to do is say something.  
Stop sitting and asking, and starting standing and acting

So please, I beg you.

For our sake,  
Do the right thing,  
It will not be a mistake.

Ashtyon Neal - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Wahlquist Junior High School - Teacher, Ann Tippets



## *Stop Bullying and Violence*

Bullying is **NOT** ok, our world probably would be a much better place without bullies. I was once bullied very badly by some kids in my class. I had to change schools and so I did. It was my third grade year the second week of school.. One of the girls was my babysitter's daughter and the other was her best friend. The bullying started the first day that I went to the new school. I wanted to hang out with the two girls, so I asked them if I could. They huddled together and then said "NO now go away" they later told me that I might get hurt on the playground while I was at recess by someone and that they were not going to help me, then they were mean to me every day. So I basically hung out with the recess lady that whole year because I was scared of them.

The bullying went on for about three weeks and I had enough. I told my mom and she was upset that I had not told her about it earlier. She talked to my teacher and my teacher did not do anything, she thought it was my fault because I was a new student and it was easier for her to just ignore the situation and me. She did not call on me that whole year. So after about a week my mom called the principal and they had a long conversation that ended with the principal telling my mom that he wasn't going to do anything about it because he didn't listen to tattle tales and that is all he thought it was.

The bullying kept going on and I hated going to school so much that I would cry every day. My mom finally called the school district office and talked to someone there. They called the principal and told him that he needed to do something, so they finally

talked to the girls about bullying, it took a while but by the end of the year it was finally resolved.

The worst thing about the whole incident was that it made me hate school and I didn't want to be there at all. Just because those two girls decided to bully me, my life was horrible. I didn't learn much that year because I was scared and worried all of the time. I spent my recess in the bathroom as much as I could and when I couldn't hide in there, I would sit by the recess lady so I wouldn't get hurt.

Many kids are bullied and they don't tell people about it because they are embarrassed or afraid, and don't want people to think that they are weak. The best thing that can happen is for teachers and principals to listen to kids and take these situations seriously. They should realize what it is doing to the victim. Even though I was only in 3rd grade it changed my life, It made me feel anxious and very protective of myself if I am in a situation where I think I might get hurt. It also made me worry about everything all the time. That's good sometimes, but sometimes it keeps me from trying new things. It has affected other aspects in my life very badly. I tumble on a competitive tumbling team. When I need to try something new I get so worried that I freeze up and can't do it.

Kids need to be taught that there are serious consequences if they bully someone, no matter how old they are. That needs to come from their parents and from school. Bullying can get so bad that it turns into violence. Kids sometimes think that if they bully someone that it makes them cool and other kids praise them for it. For some reason many kids don't learn empathy for others and learn that it is much cooler to treat everyone nice.

I think that the best thing I can do is if I see someone being bullied, I can stop it from progressing by talking to the victim and the bully to see if we can fix what is

happening, if that doesn't work then I could talk to the counselors, the office, a teacher, my mom, or if I know their parents, I could talk to them and let them know what is going on so they can help stop it. If a child is being bullied sometimes the best thing to do is to take them out of the same class as the bully so that they would feel more safe.

Bullying can hurt you mentally, physically, socially and emotionally no matter how old you are, or how small the problem seems in an adult's eyes. Always listen and take action if someone tells you that they are getting bullied. This would help prevent bullying and possibly change or save someone's life.

THE END

Lorren Weller - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Kimberly Carter



~All Lift Together~

Violence has many names and definitions. To most people, when they hear violence they think of guns and knives and action movies. Others can relate to violence and have their own personal definitions. In my opinion the youth of our nation really only know about bullies and drugs. Well, truth be told drugs are a cause of violence, but not the only one. Violence looks like pain. In my mind, violence starts with a text or simple sentence. Probably based on popular movies, in my mind I picture a school hallway. Violence sounds different based on different circumstances. Violence can be obvious, like a fist fight, or it can have no sound at all. Lots of people don't even recognize violence because it is so well hidden. Violence feels sad, angry, or uncertain. When violence affects me, my first feeling is surprised and uncertain. Then I feel sad, and when I think about it afterwards, I normally feel angry. I think every type of violence affects young people. Whether it's poronography, drugs, bullying, media, or even watching the news. Everything that happens or is done affects someone or something in some way, whether it's welcome or unwanted.

My elementary years (3-5) were some of the worst in my life. In third grade, my first friend I had ever had in school was put in another class than me. I was given a teacher who really didn't like me, and was just horrible in general. I remember that more than once I came home crying. That year destroyed all of my self confidence, and I developed a bad case of anxiety. I'm not sure, but I think I started an on and off case of depression as well. At the time, I also had a really bad skin disease called eczema, which made it harder to make friends. It was so bad, I had trouble socializing with people. Then came 4th grade. My teacher was good enough, but that's when I ran into friend problems. I met two girls, and a new friend. Me and the new friend played as much as we could, but she had lots of friends, and was in a different class than me. Eventually I had to find some new friends. So I started to play with the other two girls. They were nice enough, but after a while, our "playing" became different.

Whenever I went to recess I couldn't find them. I realized they were running and hiding from me. In the halls, one of the girls would say mean jokes about me. She would laugh afterwards and say just kidding, but on the inside, I didn't think it was funny. Every now and then I would hear/see the girls gossiping behind my back. On the few rare days when they did want to play with me, they played games that made fun of other people, and certainly would have hurt their feelings. I realized that these were not the type of girls I wanted to be around, not just because they hurt my feelings, but I also didn't want to end up acting like them. In class one day I wrote a note to them expressing to them how they had hurt my feelings and asking them to please stop. One of the girls felt bad and wrote an apology letter saying she wouldn't any more. Life was

ok after that. I didn't want to play with them, or even try to. I had learned my lesson. I felt depressed, and alone. But I figured it was better than playing with them. Unfortunately, after a week or so, they started it all over again. I didn't have any friends, or fit into any of their groups, so I would sit on the bench outside and read a book. This didn't work however, because the girls would sneak up on me, scare me, and run away laughing every time I did. Eventually the two girls started having problems with themselves. Ironically, one of the girls wanted to play with me again. So I did. She was a little better alone, but she still wasn't exactly a good friend to me. A few weeks later, I found out about some mean names the two girls had been calling me. My feelings were hurt again, but I didn't say anything about it. I don't remember exactly how, but one lunch the subject of the mean name came up. My "friend" apologized and explained that it had been her 'ex-friend's fault", and that she had nothing to do with it. It was hard to believe, but rather than make a weird conversation worse, I said ok. The rest of the few weeks left in that year were pretty much the same. 5th grade, however, was different. My "friend" started teasing me more often and making rude jokes. It wasn't even just me they were rude to. She gossiped about everybody. It made me feel very uncomfortable to be around her. Fifth grade wasn't actually so bad,(compared to 3rd and 4th grade.) it was my knowledge of what she had previously done that hurt. I was happy when I moved to my new house. I tried to rid myself of any ties I had previously had with the two girls. Thankfully, from then on, my life has only gotten better.

I think what caused the girls to be so rude to me was peer pressure. Apart, the girls weren't nice, but they weren't so rude. It was when they were together that they really hurt my feelings. Other people get caught up in youth violence for different reasons. In the first paragraph, I said that kids are being taught mainly about drugs and bullying. I think this is true, so before you disagree with me, and stop reading, hear me out. Drugs will affect your decisions. They can't affect your decisions when you first decide to take them. Starting drugs in the first place normally means you are already involved with violence. Drugs just make it worse. When you think about it, there are many people who are just rude, have had previous problems, or have been in hard situations in their lives. Drugs aren't the main cause of their violence. According to Drug Facts: Nation Wide Trends, in 2013, only 9.4% of americans did illegal drugs. I think it's safe to say most bullies don't take drugs, but have some other problem. In my opinion, one of the main reasons kids get caught up in youth violence, is their friends. I don't think parents realize how much of an influence their kid's friends are. Here's an example. You're friends with this kid your whole life. When suddenly he starts saying that you're not good enough; he starts acting different, more secretive. He starts bullying you. He gives you the feeling, that you're worthless and unimportant. So you

try to be like him. You start hanging out with shady people, doing things you shouldn't. This is when you come to a cross roads, and unknowingly, take the wrong path... Who knows, eventually, you might end up in a gang or do something worse. See what I mean? That was a little extreme, but I made my point. I think Youth Violence is really started by friends. similarly, my "friends." Apart they were decent. But together, well, they were people you really didn't want to know. It was probably caused by home situations as well. But I think that they should be responsible for their own decisions. I'm certain their parents didn't know how rude they were being. Otherwise, they would have probably said something or gotten involved.

I can help prevent violence by being a good influence to other people. I can smile and help someone get back up when they fall down, instead of laughing and giggling at them. I think treating others how you want to be treated, isn't just a silly rule to help kids share toys with each other, it's something we can all work on. To stop youth violence, our city can create a new anti-bullying program, or teach new things in others. Local schools can teach other causes of youth violence by maybe even having a violence awareness class/period in school. Our country can help by making everyday people more aware of youth violence, and help find ways to stop it. However, I don't think our country should make more laws. Rather than make more rules, our country can make people become more aware of how to help other people not break the rules. A famous quote says "rules were made to be broken." This isn't particularly true, but honestly, the reason we have violence is because people break the rules. Making a new law won't really have the desired effect. Laws only affect the people who follow them, not the people who don't. I think instead, we should be more aware of individual's situations, and not judge them based on our short-reaching knowledge.

Violence is more than physically hurting someone. Violence can hurt mentally, physically, and emotionally. Violence is hurting someone, something, or even yourself. Violence affects individuals. It can change their moods, thoughts, ideas, and actions. Violence can tear apart families, I can't think of any way it could possibly help. Violence in our country can affect whether people make well thought out decisions or otherwise. Violence affects who people vote for as president. Violence makes schools unsafe, it can make kids hate learning. Violence affects who runs our government, and how we react to them. Violence is the reason the "world is an unsafe place." If there wasn't violence, that wouldn't be a common movie quote. It is impossible to stop violence completely, but there are simple ways to diminish it. You and I can make a difference by smiling at someone or not saying a simple phrase or word. Violence isn't the government's problem. Violence is everybody's weight, we all have to lift it together; or risk falling down. We need to be humble and learn from our mistakes. We can't see

violence and think it has nothing to do with us. To stop violence, we all need to get involved.

**Samuel Ziemski - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Fort Harriman Middle School - Teacher, Brandee Burgum**



Youth violence. Even the name is repulsing to me because of how bad it's gotten. I'm just a kid, but I've seen all the effects that it can have in a child's life and their parents' lives. The words that can be said can destroy a child's world. When my young little cousin was younger, she would cry at anything mean said at her because of how emotional she is. I'm glad she is better and is now just ignoring the words they are saying and paying attention to the words meant to bring her up. Sadly, I haven't got to that point yet. I can't shrug off their words because they cut deeper than anything can. And she's 3 years younger than me. People are different but the same words have hurt them before. It hurts, and it may stick with you for awhile, even if they told you was that you're stupid. Sometimes the words like, "You should just kill yourself" or "Nobody would even miss you if you left." People may take those words seriously and start to believe it like I did for about two years. But, now I'm aware that it's never the answer and you need to not do it. Because even if you don't believe it, there are people who care for you and miss you. Parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends, etc. Some may even go into depression themselves and go down the same route you went down which lead to you taking your life. People may say to, "shrug it off" but some people can't do that! They can't just ignore what people say. Some people can change but everyone is different! Everyone copes with a situation differently and you can't try to help someone with situations you've been through that are way less hurtful than what they have to go through possibly daily! You need to assess what is happening to them and give them moral support instead of turning into something about you. Bullying is a huge problem that is barely assessed in the media and some are different and worse than others and they may have one of the worst. Please, don't compare. Help with moral support and they will start to realize that they have someone who cares about them and would hate to see them go. I understand if you hurt, everybody does. But everyone's pain isn't the same. But, you can help by trying to mend the pain of your friend. Let me tell you a story. A boy, who has a horrible stutter and who has a last name that no one can pronounce, is standing in front of his 4th grade class trying to present an assignment he worked all week on to start stuttering while presenting the thing and after he hears laughs, he breaks down crying and then was bullied for crying over a simple assignment. Then after the teasing dies down, his dog dies and he cries again in school and gets bullied even more. He then started to self-harm not knowing what it was but he knew it took his mind off the bullies. He then started to have suicidal thought but then a friend helped and told the principal about it and got the help he needed. If you couldn't tell, I was telling a story about me. Do I still occasionally have those thoughts? Yes, but I never act on them because I know I have people who would miss me and I would have people who would end up following in my footsteps someday. The violence can start in a child if they are getting bullied or homelife is hard or they just think it's fun to do to see the other children cry and call for help when in this day and age no one is willing to help the children who are getting hurt and may be developing the thoughts I got when was getting bullied by other kids too. All of you can help bring it to a stop. Talk to the principal when you see someone getting hurt or if they can't do anything about it, stand up to them to protect the other person. Because bullies feed on your fear. If we don't show the fear, then we will not give them the satisfaction that they would get if you were in constant fear of them. If you are getting bullied, do the same thing. Talk to the principal or stand up for yourself and don't let them get the feeling they get when they hurt you all those times before when you were at your lowest. Please, don't let someone go through what I had to go through. Because it caused me to keep my feelings in for years and no one knew how I felt really because almost all of my feelings were fabricated because I didn't want to have the bullies hurt who I loved too. They took my feelings but they couldn't take the only people kept me there. Kept me alive. What I did to ignore them was I hid in my room more and all I did was watch

YouTube and only go out to go to the bathroom and to get food and then I'd go right back into my room so I didn't need to feel the pain. I would play games and watch cartoons and for most kids my age at that time would think that was heaven but it was my way to pull me away from the hell that was my life. I am better now but there may be kids going through things just like I did and I want to help them get better. And I can't do that being locked in my room. I can't do it on my own either. Everyone has to put in some effort to stop it. Or else everything is going to fall apart. There won't be a future for the children that will take our places someday in society. If you aren't willing to help, then you are just as bad as the bullies. Everyone at one point in their lives get bullied and it is like a Fight or Flight reaction. Do you fight, and become one of them? Or run and tell an adult, and keep yourself safe? Sadly, a lot of people either do Fight or get pulled down trying to fly that they stay in a sort of Purgatory for them that they can't get out of unless they fight a little to get away, then soar away and get the help that you need. Children shouldn't need to deal with that. I can't stress that enough. Please, if you or someone you know or even see is becoming a victim of Youth Violence, help them. Help them get the bullying to stop and help them to feel better. If I saw someone getting bullied, I'd go help. So would thousands of people who enjoy peace. Then, there are people who would go and either stand there and watch it all happen, or they would go and add fuel to the fire. Don't be one of those people. Help so we can thrive as the generation who ended Youth Violence. Most people don't want to remember 2016 and I understand that. But, it could also be remembered as something great by, as I said, ending youth violence. Join me in trying to stop it so people don't need to be in constant fear for their safety. Whether their safety is broken down by a bully, or their mind themselves.



*Utah Board of Juvenile Justice*

---

**NINDY LE, CHAIR**

Youth Member  
Salt Lake City

**CHRISTOPHER CROWDER**

Community/Faith-Based Representative  
Layton City

**MATTHEW DAVIES**

Community/Mental Health Representative  
Salt Lake City

**JUDGE JANICE L. FROST**

Second District Juvenile Court  
Farmington

**ANDREA GUTIERREZ**

Youth Member  
Salt Lake City

**CAROLYN HANSEN**

Director  
SL County Division of Youth Services  
Salt Lake City

**ANTHONY JOHNSON**

Community Representative  
Ogden

**STEVEN KAELIN**

Utah State Office of Education  
Alternative & Adult Education

**SPENCER LARSEN**

Youth Member  
Lehi City

**JOJO LIU**

Adjunct Professor  
University of Utah College of Law  
Salt Lake City

**LINCOLN NEHRING**

Director, Voices for Utah Children  
Salt Lake City

**VAN NGUYEN**

Youth Member  
Salt Lake City

**TONYA MYRUP**

Deputy Director, Division of Child & Family Services  
Salt Lake City

**DAWN MARIE RUBIO**

Utah Juvenile Court Administrator  
Utah Administrative Office of the Courts

**SHIRLEE SILVERSMITH**

Director, Utah Division of Indian Affairs  
Salt Lake City

**PAMELA L. VICKREY**

Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys, LLC  
Salt Lake City

**DEBBIE WHITLOCK**

Deputy Director  
Division of Juvenile Justice Services  
Salt Lake City

*Staff*

---

**CUONG NGUYEN**

Juvenile Justice Specialist  
CCJJ

**ANTONETTE GRAY**

DMC Coordinator, UBJJ

**DARIEN HICKEY**

JJDPAC Compliance Monitor, UBJJ

**JO LYNN KRUSE**

Administrative Assistant, CCJJ