

2018

Utah's Challenge to Do the Write Thing
Student Writings



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UTAH'S EIGHTEENTH 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) as reauthorized in 2002. The Board is also responsible for administering federal funds appropriated through the JJDP to fill gaps in the continuum of juvenile justice services, from prevention to treatment, with quality, evidence-based programs. Members are appointed by Utah's Governor.

How the Campaign Works

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice sent information to all Utah school district superintendents, middle school principals, and teachers encouraging them to involve their 7th and 8th grade students in the Challenge. Suggestions how to tie the Challenge into course work are available online for teachers at <http://www.juvenile.utah.gov/writething.html>. Students can research youth violence as part of a history class, write a poem as part of an English class, or even consider youth violence from a social science perspective.

Following a classroom discussion about youth violence, students are asked to write answers to three questions:

How has youth violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

What can my community and I do to reduce youth violence?

School districts reported that over 1,700 students participated in classroom discussions, more than 1,500 students wrote about youth violence and almost 800 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

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Marriott International

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

Coleman Gagon

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

Madelyn Halbritter

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

Coleman Gagon - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Michael Farnsworth



Violence, particularly in adolescents, is much like a wall. It is a wall that we all encounter on this journey of life in one way or another. When we come across this wall, we have two choices, we can allow it to block our way from progressing to life beyond it, or we can find a way to get past it. The choice is yours, but how you react can, and will, determine the course of your journey.

In order to speak out against youth violence, we must first understand what it actually is and where this behavior can come from. One of the dictionary definitions says that violence is a rough or injurious physical force, action, or treatment. Now let's put that definition in the context of a child. Immediately what comes to mind is a kid physically beating somebody else. This is probably the most straightforward, without-a-doubt example of youth violence, but is that all that this problem is? Can youth violence establish itself in another form? I believe that youth violence is just as much emotional harm, as it is physical. Spreading rumors of someone or calling them names can have just as dramatic of an effect as physically abusing them. It can change their lives forever, and often also lead into them harming themselves.

How can such extreme behavior find its way into the innocent hearts of our youth? It often deals with how others have treated them. Physical and drug abuse in the home is a major factor of youth violence. Studies show that children exposed to viscous action in the home are more likely to be involved with criminal activity. Mental Disorders may also make a victim exhibit violent behaviors. Often times, the mental health of a child is what we blame the violence on, but is that the whole story? An article published in the Harvard Mental Health Letter states that thirty one percent of people with a drug abuse and psychiatric disorder have committed a violent act at least once in a year, opposed to eighteen percent of people with just a psychiatric disorder. These violent behaviors can be avoided, maybe with some difficulty, but it is very possible.

A small boy once was playing at a local McDonalds playhouse. As the parents were finishing their meal, another boy whom this kid had never met, through him into the side of the wall and began cursing at him. He then pounced at the boy and began choking him. The beaten boy finally escaped after a few moments and ran, crying, to his parents.

In the fall of 2013, the same boy, now a ten year old was at his football practice. After the practice, the players would mess around as the parents and coaches casually talked for a few minutes. This innocent ten-year-old was joking and playing with his teammates when one of them tackled him to the ground. The aggressive player who now sat on top of the boy began choking him. Luckily, within a few seconds the parents and coaches recognized the situation and ended it.

That little boy was me many years ago. I still don't know why those aggressive boys felt the need to do what he did. Situations like these that have happened to me on several occasions and have given me the point of view to recognize the issue. Because of situations like these, I know what it is like to be beat! I know what it is like to be torn from the inside out! I know what it is like to be the kid who sits alone at the lunch table, and because situations like these, I have the fire in my foundation to do something about it! Stories like mine happen to hundreds of kids every day, but they don't have the parents and coaches around to end the situation. They are torn down mentally and physically to a breaking point. Then these children who grew up in poor conditions like this, then turn to the only thing they know. Violence.

You may ask yourself, "Why should I care?" or maybe "How does this affect me? This is their problem, why should I do anything?" It affects you because every year, 200,000 homicides occur among youth, ten to twenty nine years of age. These are just the people who were fatally beaten. Even more are seriously injured and require medical treatment. It matters to you because these kids, who spend their time breaking each other down, are one day going to be the leaders in the world. One day, they're going to be adults and the problem will only get worse. It matters to you, because it is your child who is beat by his peers in the alley. It is your child who comes home crying because someone called him a name. It is your child you comes to you with depression, and thoughts of suicide. It is your child...

So what can we do about it? Like I said earlier, violence is a choice. It is you who chooses what to do about the wall before you. The first step is to recognize the problem. I have, and I hope you have too. Some things may have a strong influence on what you do, such as where you live and how you were raised. The next step is to eliminate negative influences that can cloud the mind. We need to end violence at home, we need to end drug abuse, and we need to end our prejudice. We must then provide all the support we can as a family, a society, as a nation, and as beings on planet Earth. If we can accomplish this, then I think this will help drastically with this issue that has made itself so evident in our community.

Youth violence is a serious issue. As sad as it is, in the world we live in, this problem will not fix itself and this problem will not be fixed overnight. It may take years to make a change, but if we can be supportive of each other, and just simply be kind, then it *will* be fixed. Remember, violence is a choice. It is a wall that we must all encounter. Whether or not you try to climb it, go through it, crawl under it, or just let it block you from your potential, the choice is yours. Robert F. Kennedy said in his speech on the assassination of Martin Luther King, "We can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has stained across our land, with and effort to understand, compassion, and love." So let us replace that violence that has corrupted our youth, and replace it with compassion and love.

Madelyn Halbritter - 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kim Irvine



We Are All Paintings. We Are One Of A Kind.

Someone's painting isn't just painted for decor,
it's painted with crisp movements of pride,
and dipped into the cool story of the creator.
It's covered in textured feelings,
both good and bad,
and finished off with the claimed harmonic sound,
we call a name.

Everyone walking down the street, or bumping shoulder to shoulder in the school halls. We are all paintings. We are one of a kind. Every day, children are being bullied, abused, or planning suicide. They don't realize how important they are. We need to stop youth violence. We need to know how it starts, so everyone can help.

Three years ago, I faced a bully. I was in the fifth grade, my best friend and I would hang back after recess before going inside. It was right after lunch, and we had a brownie. This boy walked up to us and was demanding us to give it to him. "No." we would say to the rude, greedy, bully that blocked our path. It became a loop, over and over again, he pestered us about the brownie. We finally gave in, for we had to get to class. I was mad he got his way, but it was only one time, so I shrugged it off.

Day after day the cycle would repeat. It got to the point that when we said "No," he would kick my friend at her ankles. Her ankles grew scars that became nightmares, and you can find them to this day. It had gone too far. We had to tell someone. My comforting words to her weren't enough, and my fight against the bully hardly did anything. The next day we went to our teacher hoping for a change. As she called him up to her desk, my heart started pounding out of my chest in excitement. I could taste the freedom on my dry lips as I licked them in anticipation. His face dripped in regret as he finally walked back to his seat. I was too happy to feel sorry for him, the pit in my stomach was gone, as if my teacher blew a wave of love and care in my direction. It was over. I was so happy, I could hardly wait for the next day when we could live without the fear of those ten minutes after lunch.

The next day, we stood side by side, heads held high, until it happened, again. We were so heartbroken, we didn't have the courage to even put up a fight. We ran back to our teacher the second he was gone. I couldn't help but feel that she had failed me, lied to me, and tricked me. My lips no longer quivered with excitement, but shook with betrayal, dying to seep into the tears I shared with my family that same night. All I wanted to do was scream and cry and hit that kid who brought these feelings upon me! The next day, he came again, about to kick my friend's swollen, scarred ankles, and I blew up. I was a ticking time bomb that has been waiting to explode, getting stronger every second I held it in. Here it was, spilling out of me like a waterfall of hate, drowning the poor kid. Before I knew it, I was drained. I spent the rest of the day feeling hollow, like a vacuum sucked out my insides, and left me to drift into my mind made of regret. But my friend was happy, and he never bullied us again. I never apologized, and it's something I regret to this day. I wonder why I felt sorry him after all the pain he caused us. Then it hit me. I was bullied. Then I became one.

We can't answer all the questions to why bullying starts, but there is always a way to help. Everyone has been bullied, been a bully, or witnessed a bully, at some point in their lives. We spend everyday in the crowded halls, watching children rush to their next class, and then listening to someone calling kids harsh names. Yet nothing happens. We walk to our next class. We move on. While somewhere that child feels unsafe, hurt, and broken. All we had to do was help them. Even just a smile. Yet we are bystanders. There are few who stand up for the right thing, but we still need more kind souls to help everyone feel safe.

People don't realize that what they say, could cut the last string someone is holding onto. Fingers swollen, knuckles white, they take in their last breath. Then let go. No more friends, no more family. No more watching a warm crackling campfire, or being the first to step on a perfect untouched field of snow. No more anything. Everyone deserves more. Each year, thousands of people plan, and commit suicide. The website "cdc.gov", stated that people ages 10-34's leading cause of death is suicide. In 2014, 42,773 people ended their lives. It doesn't matter their background or religion. We can do more than this. We can stop this. "People who make peaceful revolution impossible, make violent revolution inevitable." - John F. Kennedy.

We walk everyday creating our path in this world that will never be perfect. Children wake up everyday and have to face one person that makes their lives unbearable. They have to hold their heads up high when all they want to do is sink into the ground. Every single person on this planet can help someone. If that act of kindness starts with one smile, it will grow into a comforting helping hand, cheerful words, or a friend that makes them feel safe. Soon it'll grow so big that even the loudest cacophony won't distract us of the beauty created. We are all paintings. We are one of a kind. We can stop youth violence. We can change the world.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Runners Up

Khale Nielsen

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

Chloe Rawlings

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

Khale Nielsen – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Michael Farnsworth



Youth violence,

I woke up, excited for a new day. I got ready for school and grabbed my new book. I really like to read, and was planning on finishing it during the day. I was excited to see my friends, and to learn.

I walked into first period, and sat down. The class hadn't started yet, so I took out my book and decided to read. "Khale, is that a new book? It's not the same one you had yesterday." I answered yes, and my classmate got a weird look on their face. "You're weird, why would anyone like books?". I give a little laugh to make them think I don't care, but them saying that cuts into my soul. I know they are joking, or don't mean it, but it crushes me, makes me feel like these people are not truly my friends, that they don't want to be around me. This may not be physical violence, but I was being called weird, different, which in this modern day is a synonym for bad or wrong. I have not been significantly affected by physical violence, but I am affected by verbal all the time. I've been called stupid, dumb, retard, smart a**, among many others. I've been told that I don't have friends, that I should go away, no one cares about me, the world is better off without me, and that I would end up nowhere in life. But why? Why would people even want to say these things, because even if it's a joke, saying things like that can, and does, hurt people.

Not all youth violence is physical. Most of it is in words. "Many a true word is spoken in jest", a quote by James Joyce, tells about this. Those simple words like, "You're weird." and "That's stupid", can hurt, because even if you know they are your friends, you can't help but think that they're telling the truth. I feel like youth violence is anything someone does that, intentionally or not, causes harm to young people, even if it is as little as saying they are weird because they read a lot. This is a serious problem in the world today. 1 in every 65,000 kids commit suicide, while even more than that have attempted it. When kids are told that they are worthless, the world is better without them, or any other things that put them down, they can feel like they have no reason to live anymore. Instead of being told to go die, or that they are not worth it, they should be reminded that there is more to live for than there is to die for.

This is a problem, but no one talks about it. The stigma is so strong that it's sad. People don't tell about their bullies because they are worried about repercussions, or being called weak. People don't stand up for people because they don't want to join them. This is a horrible way of thinking. If no one is willing to make a difference, how can we expect anything to change?

What makes people do things like this? I feel like it is when they lose something that used to fill a part of their heart. Parents getting a divorce, loved one passing, or parents that abuse the child are some things that can make this hole. People feel like they need this hole filled, and they turn to violence in order to do so. They feel like

when they tell others they are not worth it, then they gain worth. They become better by making others feel worse. They are thinking about this whole thing wrong. The only way to truly fill that hole is by making friends, and helping others. If everyone who put others down, or was a bully, decided to befriend all of their victims, then they would lose their desire to harm others. They would be able to fill their heart and feel better about themselves and others. That's the solution to this problem that has affected the whole world. We need to befriend the bullies, give them friends and then they will be whole.

To stop this we don't need people to notice, we need people to care. Only after that can we make the world a better place.

Chloe Rawlings - 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Michael Farnsworth



Violence is not always physical but mental and to me the biggest impact is mental.

I grew up in a place filled with mental abuse. When I was three I was taught to hate everything like my old man did. He would yell at me and say it was out of love. That has messed me up a lot in life because I often mix anger with love. Don't get me wrong I love my old man but not the man he's become because of alcohol. Living with an alcoholic is like living with a new person every day sometimes he's nice and then he's rude and sometimes even funny or sad or angry it's like a new personality. But that's what hurts most is seeing what it does to him. Or even what he says while he's under the influence of alcohol.

It all started when I was three I lived in an old beat down house very old rustic looking with weeds everywhere. There was never a day where he wasn't drunk he was always drunk. He sometimes forgot I was there it wasn't that bad. And then we moved to Herriman into a better house a better environment to raise kids. And as I got older I started to understand that Dad wasn't always Dad. My Mom I have no clue where I'd be in life without her she's my rock my gold star but my Mom was so focused at the time on fixing her Dad's relationship that the kids were her second priority. My older sister Sage she's only about 3 years older than me had to start to raise me cook me dinner give me baths take me to and from school she had to grow up at the age of 6 to take care of her helpless baby sister. My other sister Autumn who's about 6 years older than me helped a little but she was often never home and took care of her self. It was me and Sage stuck with the abuse we had to be there for each other. The things he would say to me has affected me so much in my life. He would call me ugly, fat, unwanted, not good enough, mistake, rude and the C word the B word the A word the and F you and a slut a hoe a whore. Just terrible things that you should never say to a child especially your own. I've been bullied my whole life I've been pushed to the ground I've been beat on I've been picked last for everyone's team mate I HATED MYSELF. I still kinda do the things kids say to each other is what I call evil it's un-human like what another person can do to another.

The worst thing that's ever happened to me was when I hated myself so much I thought I was everything my Dad and friends and kids from school said. I would do horrible things to myself. Like cut my legs my arms by my tummy because when I saw my blood drip down my arms and legs and tummy I felt human. I felt W O R T H L E E S. I would starve myself make myself throw up. I was 30 pounds underweight. I looked more inhuman than I ever felt before because of what people would say. Not only was I unloved at and home I was unloved by the one person it counts most myself.

If you ever make someone feel so low to where they hate themselves you need to think about what you have just done to their life you may have changed them forever.

But the question I get most from people after I tell them everything I've been through in life is. Well what is the best way to get out of it. And how I got out of that

horrible state of mind and abuse is I stood up for myself i started to love myself because in that situation where you feel unloved by everyone.if you know yourself worth and know what they're saying is wrong and you know you're perfect in every way then you're gonna see a light a new way of life really your gonna feel whole.But you also need to stick up for yourself once they see how strong you are they won't try to knock you down even if you have to fake a smile i promise you one day that smile will be real and you really will have the confidence again.And also treat others the way you want to be treated.The way you treat people will effect you you're whole life.Even if they aren't kind to you you must always be kind and positive with everyone and every situation. Because your is life and life is beautiful it really is you just need to open your eyes a little more listen a little closer enjoy everything.Because when you're at your death bed your not gonna wanna look back on life and see all the time you could've been happy you were sad.And believe in yourself and me when i say it gets better it really does i've been through so much especially at a young age and sometimes it still happens but with a smile and a positive attitude u can do almost anything.

And tell an adult someone who can help you get out of whatever situation.And it's gonna be very hard to but you need to think of yourself and your mental or physical health.Tell a teacher a family member a friend's parent a staff at school consulier anyone who you know can help you and whoever is abusing you physical or mental it's important to.And stay calm being in that state of mind i know it's hard to but you just gotta keep calm and make sure to tell all of the details.But mainly stick up for others make sure to be the better person because if you know how it feels you need to be that safe spot for people feeling the same way.Once they see how you recovered you can give them a hope to and maybe they'll get back in a safe state of mind ,place everything really.

What is youth violence to me.To me its my childhood it's my dad its all the kids whoever said anything unkind to me it's everyone who has ever made me feel anything less than whole it's my hometown it's my school its my friends it's everyone who never stuck up for me it's myself.it's the things kids say to each other or even adults say to kids or each other.And it's even fighting.Abuse getting punched hit,kicked.hot sauce ,hot showers.any form of it.But I recovered and so can you with a happy attitude and a smile.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing



State Finalists

Strider Cofrin

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

Ethan Gibson

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

Lindsey Glod

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

Emma Joos

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

Brittany Levanti

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

Taya Manzanares

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Ashley Hauber**

Andrew McNeill

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

Andrew Stewart

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

Strider Cofrin – 7th Grade
West Jordan Middle School – Teacher, Stacey Sawyer



The World Full Of Purpose

At age 10, I experienced probably the hardest time in my life. My step-dad was drinking 2 beers a day. One day I heard yelling upstairs when I was coloring. My mom came downstairs and said, "Let's go for a walk". So me, my mom, and my little sister went on a walk. Then my little sister said " Is daddy coming?" My mom said sadly, " He didn't want to come".

We came back from our walk and the door was locked. My sis and my I just heard her say, "No, don't do this babe.". She looked back trying to smile and said, "Do you want to go to the store?" We both said, "Yeah," so we went to the store. I got some Legos. My sis got a "Little Live Pet" ;it was an owl. We all sat on the porch: me building Legos, my sis teaching her owl tricks, and my mom eating snacks. We heard my step-dad say, "YOU LIAR!" and the pounding of fists. I shivered for a moment while my sis made a sad noise and cuddled up to my mom. My sis said, "Is daddy ok?" My mom said, "We just don't agree sometimes." I got a Lego creator set and you can build 3 different things in that set, so I built a dragon because my step-dad loved dragons. When we finally got inside, mom said "Just don't talk to Jed, ok?" We both said "Ok" and I snuck upstairs and gave him the dragon. He looked at me angrily and I held out the dragon, then he shifted to a smile. Then he said sorry to everyone.

In that moment, I was so frightened by something that I was not involved in. But I raised up to stop it. We all need this in the real world. Most people will walk right past a fight like it's not happening. We need to know why it's happening.

The World Full Of Purpose

We need to know why people fight each other. Drugs? Home abuse? Drinking?, Race? All of these are part of why this world is falling apart. People try to fix it but just make it worse. People need to fix it with kindness, not anger not impatience. This world needs to be fixed. We may just be a building full of people but if we use kindness we can be a building full of people with a purpose. Can I get an amen? Today gangs are fighting for space. They think that they can just take some space for their own. Kids are getting angry and taking it out on themselves beating themselves up. Because we see it on the news that means adults are involved too. Sometimes kids don't listen to their parents and parents don't listen to their kids. Communication is very hard in the world today. People just refuse to listen to each other. The news seem to get scarier and scarier every day, this needs to be stopped, only you can stop it.

People need to stand up against violence. People need to not walk around like the world is perfect, that they are perfect. People all around the world are killing themselves because of violence. We need to stand up and stop violence. It may be just one person at a time. That's ok, over a while it stacks up. The world can never be exactly perfect but most people that might have been angry in the past might now be helping others stop using violence. We all need to stop violence. Maybe not now maybe not here as long as everyone here help each other get away from their problems we can all be happy in life.

Ethan Gibson - 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kim Irvine



A Weight That Hurts

Excitement
is spiritually attuned to the heart of a hummingbird
flying complex patterns on its mikado yellow wings
But in this contradictory world
where coquelicot colors
are in the same spectrum
of wenge colors
it's likely that anger
and sadness
combine together
to form the midnight black soul
of an abandoned vulture
gliding on the currents of others happiness.
Feasting on the hapless souls
of the other beings who it shares its world.
All because
the others birds songs
include the mocking
of its blush pink head.

This poem about birds can easily be compared to the world today. The world today is full of bullies-vulture, and victims-hummingbird. The bullies usually only hurt others because they are hurt. They are aching inside for a friend or and output for the hard time their going through. Youth violence is when a kid orally or physically hurts somebody else. More often than not bullies are the victims of some adversity. According to Ambassador 4 Kids 28% of kids who bring weapons to school say they experience violence at home. Imagine those kids who lost their house or somebody they love I'm sure they might think about bullying as well. I like to think of bullying as a trebuchet. A trebuchet is a medieval catapult that uses a weight to move a sling in a arc pattern throwing a large projectile into other objects. Now imagine the bully as the trebuchet and a hard time their going through as the weight, with enough weight that bully can become deleterious. So to stop bullying we need to balance the bully out. We need to give them enough light to cancel out the darkness.

An experience I had in first grade still stuck with me all these years. It was any normal day in that medium sized room classroom with carpet all over the walls. All the kids were either talking or doing their homework. Our teacher walked in and the class went silent or as silent as any first grade classroom can be. But as the day slowly went by this average size brusque kid was causing problems. He was refusing to do his homework and outright denying anything the teacher told him to do. Eventually after a few heated moments where the class was intently listening to the fight between the teacher and the bully the intercom crackled. "We have a situation here will you tell the Principal to come down." Soon we heard the light steps of our school principal in the classroom talking to the bully. Suddenly there was screaming and, the principal picked the whole chair and bully up and out of the classroom. The whole class started to gossip and sigh in relief. I was glad that he was gone but a few days later my mom and sister reported to me that they saw the bully and his dad at the gas station eating food. It dawned on me, he probably didn't have a very easy life. Because the weight he had on him he probably just snapped and took it out on people. We need to be kind to everybody, I feel the best way to describe this is in a quote by John Donne-, "Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." Because everybody is connected and affected by bullying we need to be full of kindness and understanding. The website Ambassador 4 Kids states, "1 in 4 kids get bullied." That is a lot of kids, so to put it in perspective if my school has roughly 900 kids then that means 225 kids have been bullied at my school. There are an infinite many ways to help others, you could sit by others at lunch, smile at people in the hallway or help somebody with homework. To prevent any bullies we all need to be benevolent to all those around us, we need to converge into an conference of love, we need to spread compassion. We need to be a light to stop the stop darkness.

Lindsey Glod – 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Kimberly Carter



Why Fight?

We all know violence is bad and that we should stop it, but do you really know what violence is? Violence is the intention to hurt someone in any way. It looks like gossiping, a text message, or anything deliberately to hurt someone, sometimes it can be very hidden. Violence sounds like tears, punches and anger. Violence feels like you're lost in a dark room with no windows or doors. Any type of violence can affect youth in so many negative ways. Gandhi said "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; but the evil it does is permanent"

I haven't had a huge experience with youth violence like I know some people have, but I think I have experienced small bits. If I think about it, Unfortunately, I have been a bit of a bully. Rebekah, my sister skipped a grade. This meant I had to share even more with her than before. This included friends, a room, and everyone just sort of automatically put us together. I know it sounds terrible but I felt that way for a long time. Part of it is that I am older by over a year, and yet Rebekah was still smarter than me, and better than me in school, sports, and violin. I got jealous of her. I honestly wanted to hurt her, I don't know why, but I did. I often criticized her for things I also did. I was really rude to her. When I was at school I acted differently, I think I wanted to hide what I was doing. I think I really wanted to hurt her, and at the time it got her to leave me alone less. This somewhat made me feel better at the time. I think that I thought it helped at the time, but really all I was doing was damaging our friendship. I wasn't making anything better. The good was only temporary, but the evil I did was permanent. I know right now we don't have as good of a friendship as we could of. I realized that

just because Rebekah and I are different, doesn't mean she is better. It really helps to just be kind instead of rude. Just know that you are you, and you are beautiful. That's what I realized as soon as I tried to show love towards her. I don't think my friends we're affected too much by this, but I really don't know. That's my story about youth violence, I know it's not a huge thing like some people have had, but it is my story.

The reason I bullied Rebekah was because I was jealous. Personally, I think that's a leading cause. I often connect a low self-esteem with jealousy because I wanted to be better. I also think that many people bully because of stress, anger, or depression. Another cause could be drugs or alcohol, especially when they want to keep it a secret. The media can also affect youth violence a lot. This could be social media with cyberbullying. There are plenty more causes for youth causes, but I think theses are some of the top ones.

We know we need to stop youth violence, no matter how small it seems. Being bullied when you are young can have lasting effects. In order to prevent this, we could have a school-wide assembly or video about bullying, we could have lessons about it, even just once a month. I think that would help a lot. I can help prevent youth violence by watching for it at school and trying to be a friend with someone in that situation. It would even help if the word were spread about bullying. Our city can help stop youth violence by having a day dedicated to anti-violence. Our country can stop youth violence by even something as simple as a hashtag on social media to get the word out. We need to stop youth violence somehow.

Violence is anything done to intentionally hurt someone in any way. It can affect kids and adults negatively in so many ways. It affected my family because I don't have as good of a friendship with Rebekah. It can even affect learning, if someone is being hurt, they won't want to focus on school. Even just one person being hurt can make a change in the world if they own a gun. If violence in youth were even reduced, the world would be a better place. If they were hurt when when they were younger, they could carry that pain for the rest of their life. I can help stop youth violence by simply spreading the word about bullying. It just isn't right to have a fight.

Emma Joos – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Michael Farnsworth



The Demons Inside Us All

We all have demons
Or voices in our heads
Words through our phones
Scars on our hearts
Insecurities that threaten to take us down
The demons can change shape
Can change vowels and consonants
“Fat”, “Ugly”, “Stupid”
They shoot at you like bullets from a gun
Make you feel alone at the darkest of times

Listen closely and you'll hear them
They'll pick you apart at your weakest
You can react, we all eventually do
Do you cower in a corner and let them eat away at you?
Do you lash out and spit your own bullets right back?
The demons win either way
Firing your own guns of anger won't heal the battle wounds you wear
They'll just invite more violence and fuel the flames
For fighting fire with fire just burns down the building
If you can't stop the bullets, what can you do?

You could lie down
Cower at the spray of insults
Take them in
Wish for more to just hit you until it all just ends
But that won't make them stop
We're told to just ignore the bullet holes in our self-esteem
That they'll stop if we don't respond to them
The problem is that ignoring wounds doesn't make them go away
It just allows them to get infected, to make the rest of us f a d e a w a y
Until they're the only thing left of us

When all you can think about is your demons
They slowly eat away at you
Tell you you aren't worth it
And when you look at it that way,
They might just be right
But there is so much more to a person than their flaws

They have beautiful qualities to them
Their insides are what matter
But they still feel alone
Like no one else knows their pain

For years in my life I was controlled by a friend
Told I was nothing, fat, ugly
That if I knew what was best for me,
I'd end my life
I was hurt, battle wounds dug into my skin
Until she apologized and stitched my wounds
I forgave but never forgot
How could I? She never let me
She kept telling me those same things over again
She'd cut me down, build me up, and cut me down again
And I forgave time after time, my demons lived on
And I let them

Until one day, when I discovered a first aid kit
I opened it and found the good things about me
It never told me I was fat
It told me I was beautiful
That I was worth it, so I repaired my wounds
I never lashed back out, instead I gave myself bullet-proof armor
I knew that, even if she tried, she couldn't hurt me
I realized that life felt a lot better with no open wounds
I still wear the scars, I still have demons that tell me I'm worthless
But they are just reminders of my victory

Look around at the people around you
They have demons too
They may have p h y s i c a l demons
V e r b a l demons
“ F r i e n d l y ” demons
E l e c t r o n i c demons
The demons that haunt your t h o u g h t s
You don't know what their demons are doing to them
Perhaps they've taken the form of a parent or friend
So what can you do to help those that struggle?

You listen to them
You share that burden with them, in hopes theirs becomes a little lighter
All they need is someone who cares, someone to talk to

Humans have a gift of emotions such as empathy and compassion
Use them and dry their tears
Be the shoulder others cry on that you never had at a specific time in your life
Sometimes we must look at ourselves
And see the demons that have taken us over
That have told us to say things we regret
So come forth and admit that the bullets you fired were your own doing,
And lend them some first aid
Because Heaven knows, we all need some

Allow the fallen to r i s e u p
Help the weak to regain strength
Defend the honor of yourself and those around you
Yes, lift up your shields and say that you will not

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today

That we, no matter the race, gender, or religion, as human beings will stand up
That we will persevere
Because no matter our backgrounds,
Our highs, our lows,
No matter how old we are,
We are **human**

There is a demon inside us all
It whispers lies about us, and others,
Shoots bullets from it's twisted tongue
And leaves us all for dead
Sometimes the demons attack us
Eating away at the little self esteem we have left
Sometimes we **are** the demon
Firing away at those around us
No matter who they are

Oh, yes, there indeed is a demon inside us all
Physical,
Verbal,
"Friendly",
Electronic
They all serve the same purpose
To hurt and destroy and shoot you down

But human beings can stop their sting,
They'll always be there but perhaps first aid kits are all you need
To fix bullet holes
Kind words are to depression as first aid kits are to bullet holes,
Meant to heal
All it takes to end the violence of the demons that roam the earth,
Is human love, listening ears, and kindness

For human love is the only feeling that can rid the demons inside us all

Brittany Levanti – 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School - Teacher, Whitney Lee



Violence Against Ourselves

What is violence? When we think of violence we think of anger or threat right? As the shouts grew louder i grew weaker i blamed myself, i don't know what to think to be exact. I couldn't understand why they would want to split apart was it because of me? Was it because i wasn't good enough? I told myself that it was my fault, little did i know i was hurting myself. It's hard to see the most important people in your life split, it's as if they would forget about you when they do. I was sad, I locked myself away and cried every night i couldn't talk or express myself in the way that people would understand. I started wearing black and I dyed my hair, my hair was my safety blanket. I needed to take control of something I couldn't control anything in my life besides my hair so i cut it. I cut it and died it i felt a relief take over my body. I felt like a leaf slowly falling from a tree I felt as I could never fall until a gust of wind blew me away. I always need to take some kind of control in a situation that I can't control, it helps me feel better. I had no one to talk to, Everyone who tried to talk to me I would push away. They couldn't ever understand me. I told myself I was not perfect, that no one cared about me. I was more violent towards myself than anyone else could be. Whats violence exactly? Telling people you are ok and bottling up your feelings until you explode like a volcano and do something that you'll regret. Sometimes the worst violence isn't caused by someone or something else but rather than yourself, the way you treat yourself.

Violence has affected the way I look at the world, it's affected the way I sleep or even the way I do certain things. I try not to screw up I try not to disappoint anyone. I

joke around a lot because i'm scared that if I take anything serious that it will actually matter so I keep myself hidden. Carried away like a bottle in the ocean waiting for someone to open me, to read me, to understand. Every chance I get I try to make people smile because I don't know their story or what they've been through.

I feel as though the main cause of violence among youth is what they are dealing with at home. You can have a house but no home, have so many friends but non at the same time. Humans are weird like that we don't want to be alone, so we throw all our anger out on other people so they understand what we are going through. We aren't born to bully. When a baby is newly born she/he comes out crying because its not use to the real world, it's always been hidden away. It's always been in a little shelter to be formed. Maybe we are more similar to babies then we think, we hide ourselves away from the real world and pretend like everything is ok but we are just bubbling up all the violence inside us. A wise woman once told me, "you aren't born to kill Non of us are, but you don't know what you're capable of until you go through your worse and don't come out your best."

Everyone can prevent violence it's a matter of how much you want to do it. I try to prevent violence by always stepping into a situation where people are being bullied. Or trying to make people smile every chance I get. When your life's a rollercoaster you hook onto the little things, even just a compliment can make someone's day.

Believe it or not we are all affected by violence, there's a reason why we make sure our locks are tight at night. There's a reason why we make sure our windows are locked or our phones are nearby. Violence has affected everyone, so what is violence?

Violence is a state of mind that overpowers every positive energy in you. It's something that is able to kill or leave you empty. But when there's a bad there's a good and when there's a happy there's a sad, but most importantly when there's violence there's hope. Maybe we just need to dig a little deeper into the cave to find the hope but it's there, it always it you just need to overcome your anger.

Taya Manzanares – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Ashley Hauber



Slap in the face
Kick in the shin
Broken arms
And broken hearts

Idiot
Retard
Ugly
Fat
These are things you imagine you are

Sticks and stones may break my bones
But words hurt the most
I go home crying and yelling too
But maybe it's the youth violence that causes it

At school I am picked on for my clothes
Then people break my nose
My nose don't hurt
But my soul is broke

You may be different
But that's ok
Because I like you anyway

It's caused by one little thing
That is why it hurts
Kids tease and bully and that is not ok

It is because of a hairdo
Or a simple little shoe
It's a shirt
A pair of pants
That causes it all

It causes harm
Ditching school
Even suicide

All for what

youth violence

It hurts the most
It kills our soul
It breaks our heart
So let's make it stop

It hurts the head
It hurts the heart
It hurts the soul
And family too

I will make a group
An assembly too
A billboard
A school
Just make it stop

I will tell an adult
A teacher
A principal
A counselor
So they can report it

I will do anything
I will give a speech
And we can clearly see
That it is not ok

Let's provide some love
Some hope
And get it through their hearts

I will watch for it
I will wash it away
Down the drain it goes

It is dirt
It is garbage
It is waiting for a enemy

It is not ok

I will tell people around me

I will make it stop

Andrew McNeill – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Michael Farnsworth



Secret Bullying

I wake up and prepare myself for another day of school. When I arrive I go to my classes and meet up with my friends. They meet me with a few kicks in the legs and a shove in the back. We all laugh even though I am secretly hurt. We start to do our assignment and I mess something up. "You idiot," one of them replies, "Why would you make a stupid mistake like that? You freaking idiot." Although this hurts, I still stay quiet. Next class. Greeted with kicks by my same friends. This time the flip my chair over. We all laugh but I am secretly hurt again. When were waiting for everybody to dress they run around and push each other and me. Although they hurt me, sometimes I do hurt them. We are all "friends". Sometimes I just wish that we could be true friends and not hurt each other and just be kind to each other.

Youth violence. Being the practical person I am I opened a new tab and searched, "Define violence." Behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. Violence is someone's behavior that is intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone. To me, youth violence equals bullying. Bullying come in any form. Sometimes physical. Physical is very powerful but I believe the bumps and bruises isn't really what hurts them. It the emotional part. And that is the other type of bullying. Emotional bullying. It is the worst because it comes from every type of bullying. Physical, cyber, verbal, every single bullying you can think up has that emotional part in it. And I believe that emotional is the worst kind.

Many may say how bullying is not really there or it is just in movies. But bullying is really there. The reason why people that bullying isn't a real thing is because in movies it is portrayed differently than it really is. Usually, in movies, bullying is always shown as public. In the school halls, in the locker room, even in the classroom. But bullying is actually secret. Bullying is takes place in what may seem like a friendly situation. Sometimes in jokes that are meant to be friendly. But even though it may seem like it is good it is still hurting them emotionally. This is why most people don't believe bullying is real, because it isn't public and you can't see it immediately. Bullying usually happens between people that may seem like your friends. They push, punch, and hurt you in a "friendly" way. They call you names, call you "retarded" and "stupid" in a "friendly" way. In my case we all do this to each other and we are still each other's "friends".

This is how youth violence affects me. Some people may hurt me and push me and say they are still my friend. They may call me stupid or call me an idiot and still say they are my friend. They act exactly how a bully would, but say they are my friend. But like many others, I stay silent. Silence is the part that is also very harmful. You stay silent and nobody notices. In my first paragraph I purposely used the word "secretly" to show how truly secret and personal bullying is. Not only the physical hurting that people perceive as friendly but the words that hurt especially. They get to you both outside but in the inside where your heart is.

Of course I have to realize how I am also affecting them back. I kick them back. I punch them back. I shove them back. Sometimes I even call them names back when they make mistakes. We all hurt each other but none of us realize it. We need to understand how we are hurting each other and turn it around.

Eventually, this tormenting cycle leads to sadness and sometimes even suicide. Many have turned to this as an answer. When this sadness comes in it gives their "friends" more

reason to make fun of them. They say, "Oh wow you're so sad and depressed!" and they think it is a joke. This makes the person think it is a joke and that their "friends" are still their "friends". This endless cycle leads to drugs, violence, and suicide.

After writing the majority of this paper I realize that before I expect my friends to change that I need to change too. I need to stop bullying them and start to understand on how I can be better. The change starts with me. This is why we need people to stand up and notice how this is hurting people. The first thing you can do is look in the mirror at yourself. Really truly look at yourself and see what you can do. What can you do? Notice others. Smile. Say hi. Stand up for others. Be someone's true friend. When you do these things you can literally change someone's life. You can make them happy. You can be the light in their life. You can save them. So start now. Look around you, and be the kind of person that someone needs you to be. This is what you and I can do to prevent youth violence. Take a stand.

Andrew Stewart – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kim Irvine



Abstinence From Violence

When you hear the words *youth violence*, what pops into your mind? There are many different forms of it, not just getting pushed into a locker. Backstabbing, bullying, gangs, gossiping, fights, cyber bullying, the list goes on and on. To me, youth violence is anyone acting aggressively towards someone else to degrade them. No two circumstances of youth violence are the same. In one the bully might think that what they are doing is not bad at all, but in another the bully might know what they are doing and just keep plunging the jagged knife in deeper.

Bullying is never okay, and it almost always comes back around to the person who was the victim. For example, one of my most memorable bullying experiences was in second grade. There was this kid-I'll call him Alfred-that always looked at people with a glare of disdain and a look of condescending, but I never guessed that I would be one of the people that he focused on. He would follow me every day and try to bother me. Alfred knew that I had tender feelings, and he always enjoyed seeing me run away crying. There was one spot in particular that I would go to cry, and that year I believe that all of the grass was drown by a sea of a million sapphire tears. Bullying me always gave him a feeling of being superior and the idea that he was one of the pack. Soon his friends joined in, and after a while I decided that I needed to tell my parents about it. I did, and the matter was soon resolved.

In sixth grade, I had apparently forgotten how much bullying can hurt. We had someone in our class named Adam, who was not the most athletic. Whenever we played four square, he would play with us and we would always try to get him out. I didn't see the harm in this, I just saw that he was an easy target to make me get a higher score in the game. Later in the school year, my class was trying to come up with nicknames for all of us. It was going great until it got to me. For some reason I don't mind being called Drew, but it really irritates me when people call me Andy. Some kids in my grade discovered this, and whenever I was in the game they targeted me like I had targeted Adam.

It flies.
Swirling through the air
With each contact
Bringing another crushing defeat.
It flies.
The pain it brings
May never be known
To the one
Who forced it forward.
It flies.
With everything around
Giving no heed
To the sadness and sorrow
It flies.

I learned that year that it hurts really bad to walk away from anything you love. For me, it was four square. It was one of my favorite things, but I got tired of being called 'Andy', 'loser', 'stupid', and 'butterfingers'. I used to be like a battery; full of charge and always ready for action. Now I am less of an outgoing, energy-filled kid because of my experiences, but on the bright side I also know that bullying can hurt, so I don't do it. At the start of this year I promised myself that I would abstain from bullying and be the person to stop it. Bullies may look cool, but they are really perfidious and deceitful, and the damage they can do is quite immense.

Most often kids get bullied for things that they can't change. Having lots of freckles, having a birth defect, how they talk, the color of their hair, what clothes they have to wear, who they are related to, etc. Being bullied can completely change your self esteem, character, attitude, and thoughts. It's not fair to you or the people around you. It's not fair for those around you because they don't know the person that they used to know. It's not fair to you because you lose friends when you have a character change. That can have drastic effects. Often bullying can lead to depression and it can sometimes cause someone to commit suicide, but people need to know that suicide is never the answer!

"Having a rough day? Place your hand over your heart. Feel that? That's called purpose. You're alive for a reason. Never give up!" -Unknown

Bullying is distributed quite far out. Just how far out? 83% of all girls and 79% of all boys have been bullied in school or online. Many people just try to avoid the bullies by not going to school. About 160,000 teens a day skip school so they don't have to deal with bullies. Bullying is a *huge* dilemma. What causes youth violence? There are many different factors that may cause it. A bad situation at home, wanting attention at school, or sometimes even just jealousy. As I have been observing the bullies in our school, I realized that many of them have also been bullied in the past, so being bullying may also be a reason that some kids bully other kids. They might want other kids to know what pain they felt and not know how to convey that in words.

What can be done about youth violence? For one, we can all stand together united in our cause against bullying. In school we can stand up for the people that won't stand up for themselves. We can comfort others when they need to be comforted. We should all be like that - spreading comforting feelings. We will all be remembered by our works, be they bad or good. If we are known as the person that brings everyone's self esteem up and helps people when they have a hard day, we will be remembered the most.



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