

2019

Utah's Challenge to Do the Write Thing
Student Writings



Table of Contents

Utah's Challenge 1

National Finalists

Trenton Newbry 4

Kathryn Smith 8

National Runners Up

Eli Larkin 14

Lily Masina 17

State Finalists

Gavin Berrett 21

Kempton Christensen 23

Kaylee Christensen 25

Mike Corcoran 28

Madison Dowd 30

Keltzy Jones 32

Amy Lam 34

Nalani McCullough 36

Cole McIntyre 38

Matthew Moser 40

Joseline Pena-Suaste 42

Ethan Strang 47

Lexy Torres 49

Guadalupe Velazquez 52

Cayleb White 53

Ryan White 55

**Do the Write Thing
Organizing Committee**

- Nindy Le, Chair
- Gabriella Femat
- Candice Karnga
- Diego Martinez Lopez
- Mary Oling
- Julie Tang
- Sophia Wrathall

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice

Membership 58

2019 Do the Write Thing VIP Judges

Judith Atherton, *Retired Third District Court Judge*

Chair, Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Chief Mike Brown

Salt Lake City Police Department

Kim Cordova, *Executive Director*

Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Coleman Gagon

2018 DtWT National Finalist

Madelyn Halbritter

2018 DtWT National Finalist

Renee Jimenez, *Judge*

Third District Juvenile Court

Jo Lynn Kruse, *Retired*

Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Spencer Larsen, *Former Chair*

DtWT Committee

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice

James R. Michie, Jr., *Judge*

Third District Juvenile Court

Rosie Nguyen, *Journalist*

ABC4News TV

Judge Mary T. Noonan, *Retired*

Interim, Utah Court Administrator

Patty Norman, *Deputy Superintendent*

Utah State Board of Education

V. Lowry Snow

Utah House of Representative

Ann Silverberg Williamson, *Executive*

Director

Utah Department of Human Services

UTAH'S NINETEENTH 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 on 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 2,200 students participated in classroom discussions, nearly 2,200 students wrote about youth violence and over 900 chose to submit writings for review. Students from the University of Utah, Weber State University, and Westminster College participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top ninety writings. The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice then selected the top twenty 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

Marriott International

National Campaign to Stop Violence

Southwest Airlines

University of Utah

Weber State University

Westminster College

Viridian Salt Lake County Library's Event Center

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

National Finalists

Trenton Newbry

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

Kathryn Smith

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

Trenton Newbry – 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Kimberly Carter



Fifth Grade Friends?

For the "Do the Write Thing" Challenge

Many see violence as physical aggression, but more of its profound impacts are on the mind. Violence is anything from bullying to painful physical conduct. Violence looks like darkness with an increasingly large red light, which inescapably takes over you, rendering you hopeless and afraid. It sounds like a blur. You're heartbeat, a ringing in your ears, and a blur of outside noise are all mixed together into a eerie tone, only letting in outside noise when you are being threatened. And violence feels relentless. This topic may be less relatable for some people than others, especially in safer communities. But more often than not, violence goes undercover, and unseen attacks happen all the time in subtle gestures and purposeful actions that can hurt someone not physically, but mentally.

In third grade, I moved to a new school, and it didn't take long for me to get a friend, luckily. I recall that he had just moved in too. We quickly became best friends and did fun little games with each other and talked a lot. Over the course of two years, we snowballed up a little friend group. But the summer after fourth grade turned it all around.

Unbeknown to me, my friend started hanging out with a different crowd, this time, not friendly. We hadn't really been in touch over the summer, which I extremely regret, knowing the impact it might have had. When we both returned to school, I sat behind and to the side of him. I kept trying to get his attention for various reasons, to talk, to plan our recess, catch up, things like that, because I hadn't been able to find him before school started.

He started off by ignoring me. I didn't catch on. But I quickly spotted out the mean kids in the class. Slowly, I gathered that they were all acquainted. My friend had joined a new group. He started to push my desk. Shove my papers off. But it escalated quickly. His club had started to form against me.

I remember a day when we were doing our centers as usual. My group had just finished a board game sort of thing, and we started messing around with the pieces. Kind of role-playing pretend. But one kid didn't like that at all, I still don't know why. Out of the blue, he lunged out and hit me square on with his forearm. He had a thick cast on it. As I returned from the office, ice pack in hand, I saw the teacher trying to sort out what had happened. As I stepped inside, my little fifth grade "friend" and his group were all together with the kid, and trying to get more people to join them. They turned and started blaming me for all of it, purely out of hatred for me. They were nowhere near the accident and my group. But it got worse.

So, after another month or so of his horrible treatment escalating, our teacher came to terms with it and had a talk with us after school. Then I broke. I started weeping and telling her all about it. I couldn't handle it anymore. My old friend started crying, too. We saw a school counselor the next day. I explained that we were, for two years, the quintessential friends. (I tried to say that, but I didn't know that word back then.) Everyone knew us, and we had no trouble. It was fine. And when it was his turn to talk, he gave the most cruel reply that I can imagine:

"After fourth grade, I just, I thought I *had* to be friends with him." [Not as in the inability to break a great friendship, but more like carrying on an old, disliked tradition] We were the dynamic duo, with the strongest relationship imaginable. I won't ever forget what he said. And that broke my heart.

Finally, it was settled. We had occasional encounters throughout the rest of elementary school, but none in middle school, so far. But what he said, let's just say he doesn't know how much it changed me. For a while, it was hard to get friends, even slightly still to this day. I'm not as confident as I was. I thought that our friendship was just an example of how bad at keeping a friend I can be. His words somehow turned the blame, in my mind, right back at me. I always keep a close eye on my friends now, and our relationships, because I never want to lose a great friend like him

again, at least when he was a great friend. This story isn't some whiny little kid drama tale, it had a really big effect on me. It was worse than I can say.

The best way to stop youth violence is to open up about it. I told my parents about it, and they helped immediately. They told me to stop the blame game, and look at his circumstances. The kid has multiple older siblings, much older than him, and they weren't a great influence. He also had peer pressure from the people he started hanging out with to stop being with me. I think those are pretty popular causes of youth violence. I'm not saying that makes what he did to me okay, but it helped me to realize that it wasn't *my* fault.

Shortly after, I met two genuinely nice kids. We were a great group, like Harry, Ron, and Hermione from the book Harry Potter. Two boys and a girl. We stuck together and did everything together. Sadly, the girl had to move away, but my other boy and I are still best friends to this day.

Individuals can stop youth violence by opening up to friends or trusted adults, like I did. Schools all around can do what my great fifth grade teacher did, and supervise the problems in class, and not just sit and watch, but take action to help. Teachers can also have children write for this Do the Write Thing challenge, to help them not only identify youth violence, but realize that what they're doing may be wrong. Cities and our country can enforce anti-bullying campaigns.

I've talked with the people that used to hang out with my old "friend," and they mostly agree. They don't like him anymore. My theory is that they hung out with him for the first time and got roped in. Eventually, they realized they didn't like to be with those people, but with the limited number of kids in elementary school, and thus the power that these bullies possessed, they couldn't escape without being a main target, but even still, to prove they're still in the group, they had to fit in. (which means bully) But in middle school, with the vast number of people to associate with, they could more easily fade away from the mean kids' group. I know this is true because my old "friend"

has a completely new set of amigos, and all the kids that were with him in elementary school left once we advanced to middle school.

I can prevent youth violence by being a nice person. For every nice person someone meets, that's one mean one they don't. Don't sit back and watch. Violence spreads like an illness: with every victim, it needs something new, and if you just sit and watch, next it could be you. Go make a difference. Let your influence start now, and let violence stop soon.

Kathryn Smith – 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Whitney Lee



I'm a pluviophile. The definition of pluviophile is: a lover of rain; someone who finds joy and peace of mind during rainy days. If I notice it's raining outside, I immediately rush out the door. As soon as I step foot outside, I can't help but smile. It's quiet, other than the soft pitter-patter of rain, music that plays through my heart. The sound of peace. A gentle wind rustles my hair. This is what rain means to me.

Not all people can find peace of mind that easily, though. To some, rain is just a brewing storm, another problem on its way. One of my very favorite quotes states:

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass... It's about learning to dance in the rain."

-Anonymous

I love this quote because I feel it depicts the reality of life. Problems will always come along, so why not make the best of them? I think violence is a problem in a similar way. We can solve the problem of a storm. Maybe, then, we can solve the problem of violence too.

The first raindrop falls
A sunny day disappears
So I start dancing

I think violence comes in different shapes. While violence can be physical, it can also be mental, or emotional. Violence can be loud, the **BANG** of a gunshot. Violence can be silent, hidden in a closet. No matter what it looks like, violence inflicts pain & suffering on others. I had a friend, from 1st grade until 3th grade. I trusted her, confided in her. But time after another, she would throw that away. I told her embarrassing secrets, and just like that, they were public knowledge. I, being the young elementary schooler I was, didn't learn the lesson life was trying to communicate to me for three years. I kept coming back to her, or she kept convincing me to. It was probably a bit of both. But eventually, I had had enough. Nothing huge happened. We just drifted apart. But that's okay. We've both moved on. I'm sure that girl is an amazing person. I just didn't see her amazing side, mostly because I was distracted by her flaws, and by the pain she inflicted upon me. Our personalities clashed.

This experience changed how I interacted with my friends, for good and for bad. For example, when a friend confides in me with anything, I take it very seriously. I would hate letting someone down, because I know how much it can hurt. Trustworthiness is one of my more prized skills. A more negative effect this had on me, was that I don't like feeling vulnerable, and I don't tell my friends how I feel about things, or about how my personal life is going. Most of the time I don't realize it, but I am scared to have someone betray me.

Trees swish in the dark

The storm goes on, getting worse

But I keep dancing

Not that long ago, I heard about the school shootings going on. It shocked me that someone would go after children, in a school building, trying to learn. However, I am not scared. I am sad. A throbbing, dull sadness fills my heart when I think of all those who were involved with the shootings. All those who went through pain. All those who went through violence. Those who still carry such burdens.

After the shooting happened, we were told about it in school. Those who wished to went outside to hear the names of those who were shot, then dwell in a moment of silence. I was one of those students. I remember those few minutes vividly.

Outside, it was rather cold, and dark clouds sat above our heads. Names rang through the air. Solemn faces studied the cement under their feet. There were whispers flying among certain students. Kids chuckling, completely missing the mourning sadness veiling most of the crowd. Suddenly, it began to rain. The gentle *plink* of the rain I hold so dear. While we were out in the rain, it stayed soft. It was comforting. I began to cry, and the sky cried with me. Through my tears, I thought. I thought about the victims of the school shootings. I wondered how their families felt, and what they would do. I thought about the shooter, and what drove them to kill innocent people. I wondered if the victims thought they had accomplished what they wished to in life. If I knew I would die tomorrow, I know I wouldn't feel like I had done what I wanted to.

We enter the night
I fear it will never end
The rain pounds down, down

To help solve this problem of violence, we must understand it. To understand violence, we must understand people.

In the words of Alfred Adler, "Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another."

I think this quote is a great explanation of what it truly mean to empathize with someone. I often try to understand what people might be feeling. *How does a bully feel?* I've thought about this a lot.

A bully wants to be in control. That could be because they feel robbed of freedom, they need revenge, they need to get away from people harming them... there are many reasons why a bully might feel the way they do. But they aren't aliens. We've all felt like we need to be in control.

To become in control, bullies resort to violence. They resort to inflicting pain & suffering on others. Violence does not solve problems, and should be avoided whenever possible. At the same time, this behavior is generally understandable. If we can imagine why a bully might act the way they do, we are a step further into solving this problem.

I fight to keep hope
I feel my bones trembling
Storms aren't eternal

So, where does violence start? Violence can start many places. Violence is a cycle. I think one of the most important factors in the development of a child is how they were raised. An infant's childhood experience shapes their mind, and they carry that with them the rest of their life. That is why I also think that the environment someone was raised in can affect whether or not they tend react to things with violent behavior. According to the American Society for the

Positive Care for Children, "Neglected children and those who are exposed to abuse are more likely to be prosecuted for juvenile delinquency. Other common effects of bad parenting include failure to thrive and poor growth and development both physically and mentally."

Another cause for violence is that it is just about everywhere. There is violence in movies, video games, TV shows, books, and more. When kids are exposed to violence this often, especially at a young age, it starts taking its toll. Even though in the back of their minds they know they aren't actually harming anyone, in first-person shooter games, the player is killing people and getting rewarded. When children feel like they did a good job for killing people, even if they are only simulations, a piece of them, their empathy, dies. That later makes them less emotionally drawn away from committing crimes.

I wait for thunder

None comes, neither is there lightning

A drizzle is left

We've all been a bully and/or an onlooker. That's okay, so long as we decide to change, and do more good than bad. Stand up for someone when you see they need it! Be the someone you had or you wish you had when you went through hard times. Sometimes that can be hard, I know. It takes guts to stand up for someone else. It can feel like no one appreciates it at the time. In the long run, though, it will be worth it. And if you need feel bullied, stand up for yourself! You can do it if you put your mind to it.

I would recommend to parents that they try to keep violence in media and video games away from their children wherever possible, or at least until the kids are emotionally prepared. I think it would be good for adults to go without violent video games too.

Everybody can make someone's day a little better, and spread positivity, rather than negativity. A smile, or a kind comment can go a long way. If you know someone in particular who often seems gloomy, talk to them! Slip a kind note in their locker, or just smile when they walk by. However, you should always respect the person. If they want you to stop, back off. If you feel you,

or someone really needs it, talk to a counselor, or a trusted adult who might be able to help. It is better to stand up for yourself or someone else with words rather than fists.

I still remember the storm
And how we have come so far
Storms aren't eternal

Violence can be avoided. I think it is possible to make violence less of a problem, or stop it, if we all try. If we all put effort into solving this problem, and filling its place with positivity, the world will be a better place.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Runners Up

Eli Larkin

**8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher, Annaliese Ott**

Lily Masina

**8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Meagan Kelly**

Eli Larkin – 8th Grade
Dixie Middle School - Teacher, Annaliese Ott



Friday, June 29, 2018. A 13-year-old boy was at a town event with his friends. His father was also attending. Later that night he asked his father to talk. They sat down away from all of the chaos. His father asked him what was going on. The boy told his dad he was gay. His father had a puzzled look on his face. They sat in the dark for a moment and then his father said, "You know I still love you." "I know," the boy said. Now let's skip forward to July 2nd, 2018. This boy told one of his cousins on his father's side, thinking he could trust her. She kept it a secret for several weeks. She then proceeded to tell this boy's sister.

His sister asked their dad and he said it is true. Now that the boy's sister knew his mom needed to know. The only reason she didn't know is that his parents are divorced. So his dad told his mom and she said she already knew. The boy asked her how she already knew. His cousin told her mom and she told the boys mom. The boy's mom didn't confront the boy because she knew he would tell her when he was ready.

During the second week of 8th grade, the boy started to come out to his family and friends. He was not nervous and he was ready for anything that anyone had to say. Kids at school started to talk about it but not like it was a really big thing. Most people told him that it is cool. Almost no one was rude to him or said hateful things. Further into the school year kids started to make homophobic jokes and call him names like "Fag, Gay Boy, Queer" and other very inappropriate things. He was made fun of by certain kids repeatedly.

I am the 13-year-old boy. I am made fun of every day for being gay. But I do not care, I do not care about their comments. I do not give any attention to these people. If I show any hurt they will continue. They try very hard every day to hurt my feelings. They will not stop. I see

them make fun of other kids in the halls and in class. My teachers look at the bullies with a look as if they are waiting for someone else to do something about it.

We need to remove youth violence from our communities. It is a very big problem that will only get worse. Teachers are no help. So what are we going to do about it? We need to step up and take action. 1 out of 5 students reported being bullied. That is only the people who step up and get help. According to "StopBullying.gov" 34% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students were bullied on school property, 28% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students were electronically bullied, and 13% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students did not go to school because of safety concerns. This is unbelievable. These are horrible problems that need addressing.

Bullying is a very big problem in our society today. In the 2017-2018 school year, in between 40 and 45 students from the Washington County School District in St. George, Utah tried to take their lives. Sadly, some of them succeed. They will be missed and our hearts go out their families and friends. If suicide is the result of most bullying, when will the problem be fixed? Obviously it's a problem, and I know I sound like a broken record, but all of these bullying problems need to stop. When adults respond quickly to bullying behavior it sends the message that bullying is not ok. When students get sent to the office, they realize that they can keep going with their bullying behavior and they will never get in any real trouble.

Here is a quote from the book "Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda," It is definitely annoying that straight (and white, for that matter) is the default, and that the only people who have to think about their identity are the ones who don't fit that mold." This really means a lot to me because most people think that everyone is straight and if you're not you should be ridiculed and excluded. I have an amazing group of friends who accept me for who I am. I am very

grateful for them. My school, (Dixie Middle School, St. George, Utah) has a school program called PEP. It is for kids who have problems that they need to talk about. It is group therapy for kids. We also have a program called H.O.P.E. Squad. It stands for, Hold On, Persuade, Empower. It is a suicide prevention program. It is a rather large program throughout Utah. Although we have this school program, why are students still trying to kill themselves? Three years ago at my own school, a girl overdosed in the bathroom. She went to the hospital and nearly died. No teachers were informed about this incident and only heard about it from students. No form of action was taken to prevent anything like this from happening. There is no policy stating there would be punishment for the possession of drugs.

My school does not have a cyberbullying and bullying policy in our student handbook. Upon further research we noted that all middle schools in Washington County School District do not have any form of bullying or cyberbullying policy. We even have a policy stating, "Any middle school students who have been issued a driver's license MAY NOT drive on school property." Why does my school have this policy and not one about any form of bullying? I do not know. In conclusion, I really wish that my school would do a better job handling bullying.

Lily Masina – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Kelly



The Storms of Youth Violence

Violence. The dictionary definition of violence is behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. Say the word 'youth' is added into violence. Your first thought is youth harming each other. Though this may be true, it runs much deeper than that. As deep as to the violence in someone's home. As deep as emotions, as our blood. Some may ask what is youth violence, why does it occur, or why should it concern me? Youth violence occurs to thousands of young people each day. Whether it be from serious things of abuse and assault, to smaller things like bullying or fights. But no matter how different the scenarios are, it's still a major problem and should be treated as such.

There once was a little girl, barely reaching the age of six. She was large for her age, and new to the school. Her mother taught at the school, which is why she attended so. There were several other kids who were the children of other teachers, so it wasn't hard for the little girl to make friends. But since she was a teacher's child, she was given many opportunities to do things at a school event after school.

The little girl had the chance to monitor the halls. Originally, it was her, her sister, and three other kids. Two of them were outside, controlling traffic, while the others were supposed to be walking through the halls. Time passed, and the little girl soon found herself alone in the halls, the others had wandered outside. Then came the boys. Pride had swelled in the girl's chest, though the boys were much older than her. The group of boys tried to break the school policy, but the little girl refused to let them.

She stood in their way until the boys had had it. The boys had shoved her aside, taunting her about her weight, how she looked, and how she couldn't do anything. They told her she was worthless, that she didn't belong. They made her feel the sting of a sorrowful emotion. Worthlessness. The little girl told her sister, but nothing was done. Nothing was done. The next day of school, the group of boys were prowling across the playground. The little girl was afraid, so she hid and watched as the same boys picked on others.

The little girl was afraid, she's still afraid. I am the little girl. I had been bullied almost all the way through elementary school, until around fifth grade, things began to change. Things began to look up to me. Because suddenly, I was the bully. Things were brighter, because I wasn't being looked down upon, because people feared me. At home though, I was still teased and taunted by my siblings and it killed me. I've never been close to my family, I'm four years apart from my closest sibling. I was never involved in their memories, never a part of the group. I felt like an outcast, but when I had control at school, I didn't feel that way.

I was the predator, making others fear, making them go home crying and I felt bad but I didn't stop. Because I never wanted to be the one being picked on. It was like you had to choose between being weak and picked on, or picking on others. But putting others down doesn't get people too far. Suddenly people didn't want to sit by me, didn't want to be my friend or play with me. And I blamed them for it, not fully realizing that when I needed a friend I was just pushing them away.

The causes of youth violence are different all around. Like home abuse, a serious subject. Children across the globe are abused, beaten, cast away. They grow up in a world of violence and they are afraid. Afraid for their lives. Afraid. And that fear chases them in two different directions. Either that fear causes them to resort to violence themselves or they turn to the seemingly reasonable solution. Suicide. When the youth grow up like that they do the same

things. It's an endless cycle of fear and power. As I said, I became the bully because I hated, no I feared, being the one picked on. It's the same thing. These young adults are turning to violence because they think they are protecting themselves.

But they aren't. They are hurting themselves. Youth violence can occur because of a traumatic event, or problems with the family, or bullying, but it occurs because of us. We are like storms. The more we hold in, the more emotions we pin back the worse it gets, the more people fear us. We all have storms stuck inside of us and we are just waiting for someone to sit and let us pour it all out. Waiting for someone who is willing to see past our storm clouds and to our sun.

Violence is turned to more often now. It's seen as a solution. We need to realize that it is not. We need to see the violence, recognize it. Because we, as a community, struggle with recognizing the look of pain, of fear, in someone's eyes. We fail to realize that someone is reaching out, or someone is suffering. When there's a fight suddenly it's the gossip of the school and suddenly you're famous. Suddenly it was good that you beat them up. We never look after to victim, no, we look to the one who won. I ask myself everyday what can I do about this? How do I stop this?

Reach out. The more we reach out to people suffering from youth violence the faster it can decrease. As said, youth violence is just a huge cycle. But when you reach out, when you offer to listen to them and understand them, the cycle is broken. Suddenly you've just saved someone from hurting someone else. It's not stopping it, no. It's letting them know that you understand, that they aren't alone. That they don't have to suffer alone and they can get help. Believe it or not it helps to talk to someone, to know that they are there for you. Just knowing that someone cares is enough. Being alone is the worst possible feeling. No matter what you're going through being alone only makes it worse.

Youth violence is a problem, and it's about time we realize that. It's time we open our eyes to see children crying in the dark, to see the cruelty that's happening. At least once in our lives everyone one of us has been or will be a victim of youth violence. It's real. It is real and it is happening. This was my story, but there are millions of more people waiting to share theirs. All we have to do is ask. Stand up to the youth violence, prevent it. Suddenly you're a part of it. Suddenly you're in fear, or your making others think twice about themselves. Suddenly it's you looking in the mirror thinking what's the use? What's the use of going to school? What's the use of letting them pick on me? Am I worth anything?

Youth violence is real, and we need to fix that. We need to emerge from the shadows and step out into the light and bring others with us. What am I going to do? I'm going to think twice about what I do, I'm going to stop my words before they get to far, I'm going to put my voice out when others are being picked on or put down. I'm going to look in the mirror and say "I'm going to change. I'm going to help."

Storms are like our souls
They come and they go
With light rain or heavy snow
We fear when some near
It's a relief when they clear

They destroy, they wreck
They haunt you, they breathe down your neck
It's hard to hide
The storms inside

The storms
The storms I say
Act as one you might see everyday

People are like storms
There can be any kind
Some are light, some are heavy
It's all burdened in their mind

But alas sits the sun
Hidden by the storm
Begging to be seen
Begging to bring warmth

And if we may wait out the storm
Sitting patiently
There we may see
How nice the sun can be

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing



State Finalists

Gavin Berrett

8th Grade, Roy Junior High
Teacher, Maria Georgiou

Kempton Christensen

8th Grade, Roy Junior High
Teacher, Dustin Keali'i Flores

Kaylee Christensen

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

Mike Corcoran

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

Madison Dowd

8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Kaylee Dunn

Keltzy Jones

8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Meagan Kelly

Amy Lam

7th Grade, Fossil Ridge Intermediate
Teacher, Susan Wiese

Nalani McCullough

8th Grade, Roy Junior High School
Teacher, Dustin Keali'i Flores

Cole McIntyre

8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Kaylee Dunn

Matthew Moser

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

Joseline Pena-Suaste

8th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Aimee Tatton

Ethan Strang

8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Meagan Kelly

Lexy Torres

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

Guadalupe Velazquez

8th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda Lujan

Cayleb White

8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Meagan Kelly

Ryan White

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

Gavin Berrett – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Maria Georgiou



We Are All Sailors

We are all sailors of our own ships.
Some may have reached their destination,
With plenty of supplies and a clear sky.
Some may have reached their destination,
Just barely getting by.
Some may feel as if their destination is always just out of reach,
Wanting to sit down and cry.
All they want is to get to shore,
And it feels so close nearby.
They may paddle onwards and onwards,
Releasing their greatest battle cry,
But they feel as if they can never escape the ocean's wicked grasp.

In life, we all are born with different privileges. Some of us may stroll leisurely through our early years with food on the table, a roof over our heads, a plethora of opportunities, and a fantastic home life. On the other hand, some may go hungry, suffer the frigid cold because they have nowhere to sleep other than a park bench, or don't feel safe at home. My friend is one of these people. For confidentiality reasons, we'll call him Steve. Steve wasn't dealt the best hand in life. Growing up, he was beaten and abused by one of the people who was supposed to care for him and love him most, his father. Sometimes, Steve stayed after school or "missed the bus" because of how dreadfully terrified he was of going home. Once, he became fed up with his suffering, filled to the brim like a volcano ready to explode. Steve gathered up the courage to tell a teacher. When his father found out, he was beat. It was as if he had commanded his ship onward, making a superhuman effort to reach the shore. However, the tyrannical ocean would have none of it. It roared back in outrage, releasing a storm of pain. Steve felt like he would never feel the sweet steadiness of land under his feet. So, he hunkered down to bear the storm. One fateful day, Steve's life changed forever. His father was a ticking time bomb, and this was the day he detonated. Hearing some fighting in the bathroom downstairs, Steve scrambled to see if everything was alright. As he moved, he oozed with worry and fear. Peeking under the bathroom door, Steve heard yelling and then saw his mother drop to the ground, seemingly lifeless. Sprinting away, he frantically scrambled to find his brother, all the while screaming, "Dad killed Mom! Dad killed Mom!" Steve and his brother were crying, distraught with misery, when much to their surprise, their mother walked upstairs and instructed them to flee to their uncle's house. Soon afterwards, Steve gets word that his father had been taken by police. Someone had finally thrown him a life preserver and pulled him to shore.

Within the book "A Child Called 'It,'" David Pelzer says "Childhood should be carefree, playing in the sun; not living a nightmare in the darkness of a soul." While it may seem as though a miniscule number of children are affected by the atrocity that is abuse, www.acj.hhs.gov published a study in January of 2016 called "Child Maltreatment 2014" that was cited by www.childhelp.org. It informs that there were an estimated 702,000 victims of child neglect and abuse in 2014. This is no small number. So many children, feeling helpless in their despair, just hoping for a way out. It's our responsibility to help their dream come true. Before

we can delve into how to help, we must first understand what causes abuse. Abuse has several different causes, ranging from anger issues to poor parenting. Furthermore, some offenders of abuse carry out their actions because they have been on the receiving end of those same actions. Thema Davis captured this well when she posted on Twitter, "Refuse to inherit dysfunction. Learn new ways of living instead of repeating what you lived through." In this quote, Thema talks about how people tend to pass dysfunction down through the generations. So, we can infer that someone who has been abused may commit the same act.

Now that we understand the different causes of abuse, we can discuss what we can do as individuals to help victims of this cruelty. First, if you have any information regarding someone's safety, it is best to report it to an adult. Most sufferers of abuse are just searching, hoping for a way out, a way to safety. Besides reporting abuse, we can be there for the victims of abuse. However simple it may seem, having a shoulder to cry on can make a world of difference. We are all sailors on our own journey. Some of us may briskly glide across the water, yelling "land-ho" before you can snap a finger. Others may struggle, the ocean retaliating with brutal force. It is our obligation to help those in need. Be compassionate enough to throw someone who is struggling a life preserver. You can make a change. You can make a difference. So make one.

Kempton Christensen – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High - Teacher, Dustin Keali'i Flores



The Ray of Light

It was a wonderful time of year, during those red and orange fall days. I had moved for the first time in my life. School started recently and I would have to adjust to different teachers and peers at school, but nonetheless, I was excited. It was the night before my first day. I was so eager, I could hardly sleep. It was as if I were a young boy waiting for Christmas. The next day, I disappointedly walked into school quite late. My mother had driven me to school, and after anxiously jumping out of the car, my mother led me to the office. She proceeded to check me in. The excitement was building within me, I felt so ready to start this new journey. After being in the office for a short moment, I was allowed to go meet my new class. Then, with anticipation, I began to walk down that long, bright, sun-ray filled hall. It was as the first fall of snow on a cold winter morning when I walked into that classroom, having the hope of a fresh, new, start. As I stepped through the door I was greeted by a warm welcome from my teacher and many of my classmates. I was then assigned to sit in the back of the classroom with one of my peers. It was as if my destined companions were decided from the start.

After that point, my life became a rocket; time flew by. I experienced the moments, but everything seemed so distant. It was as if all these memories were dreams; each memory occurring only for a short moment of my life. About a week had gone by, and life there was not as expected. The life I had longed for so deeply, and had even expected, had all been a forgotten desire. I was a battery drained of life, and all this sorrow and desperation had been because of the unawareness, uncaringness, and unkindness of a forced friend, one of only a few boys my age in a small town. I felt afraid to go to school, ride the bus, and even leave home. I was a puppet being controlled by the agitation he inflicted upon me. I was too scared to stand up to him for fear that I would be criticized. He called me names I never had imagined I would have to bare, "You are worthless, ugly, stinky, untalented, and unwanted" he would often say. Occasionally he would physically hurt me in a "teasing" fashion. I had never experienced a more hopeless point in my life. Each day I was tormented by the unkindness of his words, and pain of his blows, and having the understanding that my pain might never end. I was the lonely moon in a sky full of stars. Unable to find a way to stand up against the sun and his agonizing heat. I have grown from those troubling times, but the painful memories are still lodged in my brain like a light bulb. I can turn it off for a moment, but it is always there, taunting me, tormenting me, and reminding me of the pain I experienced. Eventually, I learned to turn this pain into a lesson, and I now do my personal best to keep my community, school, and home exempt of violence and bullying.

All of us have seen or experienced these painful, life changing events, whether you have been the bully, the victim, the person that watched from the side, or the one to step in. You might have been that person who took a stand and said this is not right. You may have been that ray of sunlight on a dark rainy day, that stood out, to show the contrast between good and bad in this corrupt world. We lack this confidence in today's world. It has become uncommon to see someone that has enough integrity to do what is right, when everyone else seems to be doing wrong. Each of us individually needs to make a goal right now to "Stand up for what is right even if you're standing alone." - Suzy Kassem. This is what we need more of. We need to make a stand and be a ray of light; a ray that brings hope, declaring that not all is lost, and that there are open arms reaching towards all in need of support. We need to teach young children that standing up to violence and bullying will always be the right thing, no matter the situation.

Each day, me and about 57 million other students in the US, below age 18, walk down the halls of their schools witnessing violence and bullying and at the same time ignoring it. It's like the pollution in our air we regularly see, but too often we ignore. We can't be ignorant, we, as a country, need to overcome the ignorance that so many youth in today's world have towards violence. 83% of all girls and 79% of all boys at some point in their life are bullied, and there are 160,000 kids that miss school everyday to avoid violence and bullying. There is a simple fix to all of this; offer help, make it known, enlighten youth about the safety and protection that is available to them, and most importantly, show them love, and when you are struggling to do this, remember this quote, "Peace cannot be achieved through violence, it can only be attained through understanding." - Ralph Waldo Emerson. Show love, caringness, and understanding to both the offender and the offended. If we do this, we can make our schools safer and give them that feeling of hope, that comfort and joy you feel when you breathe in the fresh air after rainfall.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." — Martin Luther King Jr.

Be that ray of light.

Kaylee Christensen – 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Kimberly Carter



VIOLENCE BREAKS, THEN IT TAKES

Violence is aggressive and harmful behavior whether it is mental or physical. Violence looks like a mouse about to be eaten by a loud and hungry lion. It looks like fear, and it looks like sadness. It looks like anger, and it looks like madness. Violence is so incredibly loud, yet so entirely silent. Violence feels horrible. It feels like loneliness as if there isn't a person in the world who understands you. It feels like emptiness as if you are as hollow as a tunnel. It feels like you're shattered and broken, broken beyond repair. There are so many things that contribute to violence, and although we all love to deny it, violence happens in our cruel and mysterious world.

Violence has affected my life in so many cruel and painful ways. One of which is through depression. Streams of tears fell down my face every single night as I lied in my bed wondering how much better my life would be if I disappeared. Eventually, a drought came. I couldn't cry anymore, I didn't feel like doing anything anymore. The days became longer, and the only thing I looked forward to was drifting off to sleep. After all, my fantasies were far better than reality. After a while, I became numb. I couldn't feel anything, no pain, no anger, no joy, only emptiness. The emptiness became too much, and it led to horrible acts of violence. I wanted to feel something, anything except for my tortuous mind. I turned to scissors and sharp blades. I thought "physical pain is far better than mental." After a few more weeks and many new scars I came to the conclusion that I was broken. I was shattered like a porcelain doll that just fell off of a very high shelf. I would never be whole again even if someone tried to glue all my pieces back together. With this realization came me attempting to kill myself, multiple times. I tried to take my own life in so many ways that I can not even remember all. Depression had consumed me.

Slowly but surely I am getting better. I still struggle with depression, but I am resisting all urges to do anything violent to myself.

There is so much violence in our world, and half of the time we don't even notice it. Suicide is one of the most common deaths for teenagers. About 800,000 people kill themselves every year, and for all of those many, many more attempt. If you don't understand how many 800,000 people is, then that means approximately 2192 people a day and one person every forty seconds. Those peoples lives have become so unbearable that they don't believe anything can help. They believe their pain will never end, and they believe the only solution is to die. Suicide is not the answer. Please, please find a way to continue living. Sure, there might be plenty of rainy and dark day, but eventually they'll all shine with bright, yellow light. "There is a LIGHT in this world. A healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force when there is suffering, and too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways." -Richard Attenborough

There is so much that can be done to eliminate violence. I can help prevent violence by being kind to everyone. I remember on my darkest days, a simple "hello" from someone would make me feel alive again. As much as I wish I could prevent violence all over the world, it can not just be me who tries. Everyone worldwide needs to stop violence. We need to stop bullying, stop drugs, and stop so much more. If bullying and name calling stopped, imagine how many more people would be alive today. Imagine how many people wouldn't have killed themselves. Stop taking your rage out on someone else, and be the person someone lives for instead of dies for.

Violence is a painful act that affects everyone worldwide. It affects us as individuals in many hidden ways, one of the top being suicide. Violence breaks us as individuals making us believe we can not be fixed. Then, violence takes our lives. Violence doesn't affect only one person it affects everyone. If violence was reduced so many people would still be alive, and we can do that by showing simple, but powerful acts of kindness. I can show kindness, and try to make our cruel and dangerous world bearable for others, can you? "Do your little bit of good where you are: it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." -Desmond Tutu

Mike Corcoran – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Ashley Hauber



Violence, It's like a freight train coming straight at you, it's like a blow from a knife, it's like a roadblock and it's very dangerous, it affects even the toughest of people. I know how big the problem is because I have been shoved around, beaten, belittled, and laughed at and I still am to this very day. But you can be strong and jump out of the way of that train, you can dodge the blow of the knife and you can climb over the roadblock and you can rise above the epidemic known as violence. I have been trying get around bullying for a long time but It takes a long time. It's like a very deep pit that you have to climb out of. I'm still trying to climb out of that pit. It's not an easy task though, it takes all of you. We have to believe in ourselves that we can overcome this epidemic and be proud of who we are.

From a early age I was bullied, I always ended up in the principal's office really mad and upset after trying to defend myself because most of the kids were bigger than me. In the 1st grade I was beaten so badly I missed a week of school. In the 2nd grade I was beaten up many times and got abused by a close friend. In the 3rd grade I got in a bunch of fights that got me suspended. Then in 4th grade I moved to a new school and thought everything was going to be better but it wasn't I was bullied by two kids. In the 5th grade I was bullied a lot as well. In 6th grade I ended up getting in a huge fight defending my little brother but I was proud of that because I stopped the kids from hurting him, my brother didn't get in trouble and I got in school suspension but I didn't care I did the right thing and My friends and family did to. Then I moved schools again. In 7th grade I had a really quiet year. Until that summer my best friend got in a huge fight with me and we aren't friends anymore. This year 8th grade I met a new friend and he wasn't who I thought he was. He did drugs and beat me up 4 time but once he did it in front of a teacher he slammed my head on a desk a few times then threw me to the ground and started punching me super hard. So I have a long history with bullying. It definitely hardened me up a lot I really wish it didn't but It taught me a lot through the years. I bet a lot of this could have been prevented but I can't change the past. I'm glad I went through everything I did because if I hadn't I probably wouldn't have any clue how to help people and was to try and stop it. I want to stop it from happening to everyone in the future I want to spread awareness to try and prevent this epidemic and give people the help they need.

I think a lot of youth violence is caused by what is going on in there personal lives. Most of them are really insecure about themselves. Most bullies grow up with parents who abuse them and do drugs or drink. If that is the case the person is following their parents example which is beating them up in some causes which then the person beats up some kid up to feel better about themselves. Because most of these kids didn't just all of a sudden bully someone it's what they have learned and experienced. But if the kid is raised in a better environment and gets the help he needs then the problem is better because you take out abusiveness and the bad environment. An example of this the kid who beat me up this year his dad left him at a young age and he lives with his mom and grandma but, he barely sees them so he really doesn't know better but he hangs out with druggies so he is acting like them. The interesting thing is after I ran away from him when he came up to me after school he texted me later and said "What did I do wrong what did I do to deserve this I didn't do anything wrong." This shocked me because most

bullies do it intentionally. I tried to ask him later why he did it and he cried and said he didn't know why he did it all he said was that he sees his (druggie) friends do it all the time for money and for fun. This leads me into my next point.

What can we do about youth violence? The first thing we can do is try to remove people from those bad situations like my friend who i'm trying to help. You get them out of that situation they will be ten times happier. You probably shouldn't say stuff behind people's back that like you get shot in the back with an arrow without even knowing it. Help them let out their feelings if there having bad feelings. This is huge you give them a safety net and they can get everything off their chest because no one likes that feeling when everything is bottled up inside. You can support them, back them up and try to make them feel better. We can also spread awareness. We got a group of friends together and we spread awareness and we are slowly starting to make progress. My friend is starting to do better since we have been helping him get away from the (druggie) kids. That a great example of when you pull somebody out of an unsafe abusive situation they will do way better. If we spread awareness we can get bigger better help because if you don't and you keep it a secret it could lead to worse consequences. The last point and probably the most the best point is to give them support if you give them support it can change there world because you give them support it can make them feel better about the situation. I really needed support when I was getting bullied I had a friend supporting me and it changed the world for me I felt happier and stronger. That is the best feeling when you have people who can back you up, help you through a rough time and someone you can relate to. The world would be a better place if everyone had support like I did and currently do. That is definitely the best thing I have had people tell me that support is what got them through a rough time. If everyone had that safety net then the effect wouldn't be as bad.

The world will be a better place if you can jump out of the way of the train, I hope you can dodge the knife, I hope you can climb over the roadblock and I hope you can climb out of the pit. I hope you can help your friends and yourself. Together we can be strong and believe in yourself and believe in others. I believe in everyone you can all do anything you put your minds to. We can make the world a better place for generations to come.

Madison Dowd – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Kaylee Dunn



Imagine spending your life like Pinocchio. Feeling like a puppet striving to be treated like a human being, and having feelings and desires squashed by and controlled by the strings tethered to your wrists and ankles. Imagine painting on a facade out of fear of those you trust turning against you. Think about the fear you would feel knowing that they would treat you differently based on how you were built, so you would decide to plaster on a smile and follow along with the song and dance they move you through.

If you can't imagine yourself in that scenario let me paint you a picture instead. This was how I felt about three years ago when I became a victim of youth violence as I was emotionally abused by my best friend. The two years I spent with her felt like an entire lifetime. For those two years I had been shamed for things I wanted, and for the ways that I felt. I chose her to stand next to me in my life because of her personality, but I began to resent her for the same reason. When it was just the two of us she cared for me and treated me like a human being, and on those days I felt like I was in control of myself... I think that was why I didn't have the strength to cut my own strings.

She convinced that in order for people to want to be around me I had to bend in uncomfortable ways and break my back to help them, and I thought that was what relationships were. Being submissive that way people around you were happy. It wasn't until the day I had enough that I realized that wasn't true. It was the day she pulled me too far, and I couldn't stand it. I knew I couldn't keep going and if I did it would break me, but I was scared. I was scared of what she would do if I left her. I valued her happiness over my well being, and she truly had me convinced that there was nothing wrong with that.

Eventually I came to my senses and realized that if I wanted to enjoy my own life she would have to be cut out of it. It was a realization that took less than a minute, but finding the strength to untie my strings and break my client seemed impossible. It probably would have been if not for the people in my life who cared about me, and not who I pretended I was.

I have no way to prove why she felt the need to hurt me. I didn't know if she changed when she moved into our neighborhood, and I didn't know what she was like past what she showed me. She might have been bullied before and decided that the only way to stop being hurt was to start hurting. She might have learned from her family, and thought that was the way you should treat people you cared about. Maybe she needed to feel in control, so she made me feel small so she would be bigger in comparison. All I know for certain is my side of those 2 years.

I know that I can't play the victim because I never stood up to her or told her how I felt. Both of us had struggles outside of each other, and I don't know whether or not she felt that the relationship was just as toxic as I did. We could have done a lot to prevent the damage, and that brings me to my point. What can we as a community do about youth violence?

In the first paragraph I put you into my shoes and how I felt when I was experiencing youth violence. As you were reading you were probably brought back to a time when you experienced the same feelings. Whether you are the target or just a witness everyone is affected by youth violence. It ranges from things as small as name calling and can escalate to things as severe as physical violence. I believe the first step in stopping youth violence is realizing no one is immune to it. It is one of the ways that we as human beings are more alike than we are different.

I believe the primary source of youth violence is a lack of empathy, which can be caused by a lack of awareness. If we reach out to those we care for and encourage them to take a second and think about their actions and put themselves into the shoes of others just like I did for you in the first paragraph then we can continue building off that stepping stone to prevent the destructive behavior that is youth violence. As someone who is a firsthand victim of youth violence I can say that no one deserves to feel that way. Violence that we experience when we're young builds habits that become difficult to break, so it's important to stop that problem at the source to prevent the habits in the first place. If we want to stop youth violence than we need to give our youth a safe place to share their experiences. It doesn't necessarily need to be a physical place, just reaching out and supporting someone who needs it can work wonders. Youth violence is not a one man battle. It's a disease that plagues everyone, and because of that no one can fight it alone. We need to fight it not with violence, but with overwhelming kindness. We need to be there as a companion for the people in our lives, and we all need to help each other in the fight against youth violence.

Keltzy Jones – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School - Teacher, Meagan Kelly



VIOLENCE IS NOT THE ANSWER

Everywhere I go I hear a lot of “Just kill me now” or “I just want to end it all”. I hear kids slit their wrists, or beat themselves or others up. Lately I have seen or heard about terrible things that people do to others, and I just sit there and worry about it. Everyone is a book, we have a cover and a story. We can draw whatever we want on the cover put whatever name we want and have something completely different on the inside. Nobody can read the “book” unless they open it.

When my mother was little her parents got divorced, her mother later remarried this awful man. He abused my grandma, my mom, and my aunts. He was a crazy person. My mom was furious. She started to hang out with bad friends. Someone kept bullying her about something stupid and she punched the kid in the nose. My mom later knew violence was not the answer. She knew that she had to change her life around because she did not want to take her anger out on other people who have nothing to do with it. Luckily a few years later they all got their stuff and moved out of the house that abusive man was living in. He is no longer my mothers dad, thank heavens.

My mother changed her act. She knew it was the right thing to do. All of our lives are different, but we are all suffering from something. We all have a different story that is within the cover of our book, we can have long or short chapters. When you take your pages out of your book and try stuff it in someone else's cover your book is getting destroyed.

Everyone gets jealous sometimes, you know you do. But sometimes people take it too far. Take social media for an example, we all follow these people we want to be like. But sometimes we get jealous and act irrationally, like (cyber) bullying. We want to make them look bad so we can feel better. It is like a drug, we can get addicted to it. We always want to be on cloud nine so we keep pushing others down to try and build ourselves up. But you see, everyone wants to be happy too. Maybe they are going through something worse than your situation and they just want to feel better but you are making them feel worse. Cyber bullying is a type of violence, violence will not solve any problem, not for you and definitely not for anyone else.

Have you ever wondered why there are bullies and why they choose violence? They might have bottled up their anger for years, they are like a loaded gun and someone pulls the trigger and they explode. They want to relieve their anger and sadness so they force it on someone else. They just think about themselves and no one else. When someone is getting bullied and they tell you about it they may say not to tell anyone like an adult, do you wonder why? The victim might be too scared. They are not necessarily scared to tell the adult, they are probably scared of the repercussions that could happen with the bully. The bully was hoping that they would not get caught because they are using that person as a cushion. They want a place to push down and not worry about their problems anymore. But now they can't land their anger on them anymore. Their cushion has been swept out from beneath them.

Think about the cushion though, the cushion is holding too much and is being demolished. Pretty soon that comfy spot will be broken before you know it. But do not go find another one because that one will wear down even faster than the one before.

A little over a year ago my parents got divorced, I was so mad. I hated myself because when something bad happens I feel like it is my fault. Lots of kids do that too. My mom did not want me or my sister to relive her childhood. So she signed us up for therapy. Oh man, let me tell you. Therapy has helped me so much. It has made me a better person, it has helped me learn how to talk to people about my feelings and so much more. Just talking to someone makes me feel so much better. I was thinking a few weeks ago, if I had not gone to counseling when the divorce happened who would I be today? Definitely not me. Most kids when their parents have gone through a divorce they become this violent person, they want to kill themselves or other people. But this is not the way to cope with our troubles. It may be difficult to talk to someone and share your problems but if you find a trusted adult or friend they will understand. If you think they won't listen, you will never know unless you do. It is like the saying "don't knock it until you try it".

Some people just bottle up their feelings and later explode, which is not a good thing. Talking to people is the answer. You will feel better, they don't even need to say anything back they just need to listen. On that note, if you see someone walk by and they are crying or just not having a good day, don't just stand there. Even if you're in a big crowd and you think someone else will do it, everyone is thinking the same thing. Be the one to stand out. They could be your friend that easy. Even just saying "hi" to someone in the halls at school will make someone else's day so much better. It could make your day better too.

Life is not fair. It never has been and it never will be. But we can improve ourselves which improves the world. All we have to do is strive to be a better person. We need to keep our pages in our books and not try to force them into someone else's cover. We need to find a better spot to drop our problems. We can't just ignore the issues and try to make someone else fix them, because they can't. We need to treat others how we want to be treated. Violence is never the answer.

Amy Lam – 7th Grade
Fossil Ridge Intermediate – Teacher, Susan Wiese



I failed. I lost my best friend and my self confidence, all in one day. I made myself sick by crying so much. I didn't talk to anyone for weeks after a classmate in fifth grade said a really rude, judgemental, stingy comment. Instead of being my entertaining, lively, happy self I had shrunk into a deep, black hole with no one to talk to, no one to tell how sad I felt, and absolutely no one to comfort me in a really tough time. You see, I've been bullied mostly all my life. Even though I'm the girl who everyone usually knows and likes, people still tormented me. They teased me about everything: my race (I'm American-born-Chinese,) my weight, how ugly I looked, my clothes, everything. An example of this, as I said earlier, is one hot day in my fifth grade class.

"You're fat," he said." He spoke hesitantly, as if it would make a difference in the stinging words. I felt humiliated. I mean, he said it loud enough for the whole fifth grade class to hear. What, did he want the entire world to hear his words? Even though it was only two words, the words were like a slap in my face. I couldn't breathe, I honestly thought I would burst into tears. I could feel my face turning tomato red as I struggled to find a witty comeback. The only thing I could only think of was saying quietly " If I'm fat, then what are you?" even though he was tall and lean. Commenting about my weight (in front of my crush, I might add,) wasn't even the worst part. No, the worst part was my best friend at the time *laughed*. Like it all was a huge, hilarious joke. Well, I guess I missed the punchline, because I wasn't laughing. I guess I knew she liked him, but she didn't have to *laugh*. It's like whenever you have a best friend, or even just a friend, you automatically know that you have to have their back, no matter what. I thought it would be like that. She's supposed to be my best friend. She's supposed to have a clever comeback ready to fire back into his face. She's *supposed* to have my back and run to me to see if I'm okay. But no, she laughs and gazes adoringly at him. So how has youth violence affected my life? That guy commenting about my weight. Since that bit of criticism, I've been self conscious. How do I look? Do I have something on my face? Is someone staring at me? What do everyone think of me?

Personally, I think the cause of youth violence is maybe there could be something wrong with the bully's life. There could be something at home, and they just take it out on other people. They could be confused and worried inside, and they probably don't know what to do to make things right at their house. It could be that their having a bad day and say something rude that they don't mean. It could also be that they say something they don't mean as criticism but you take offense. I know that when I don't get a lot of sleep I'm more grumpy and lash out more. I'm also way more likely to roll my eyes, stomp my feet, and frown a lot. Additionally, maybe that little pest was teased in the past and is venting it out on you. Or maybe he *is* just a bully. You never know. You can never assume anything about anyone. As the saying goes, don't judge a book by it's cover. Or in this case, don't judge a bully by his words.

Even if someone doesn't mean what they say, bullying is not okay. If you've ever seen someone being bullied, you need to tell a teacher. We can make the world a better place if we just interfere with a situation just like that. I remember I saw someone getting bullied. Now, I am very protective with my friends and if I see *anyone* teasing them, the bully will have to mess with me. So naturally I went over to the person who was bullying and said "Hey, knock it off. What you're doing is not cool." I didn't even see the person's reaction. I just turned and walked off. I felt pretty good, though. I made someone's day better by obstructing a bully's target. Go me!

Anyway, I can prevent youth violence by literally, just standing up to bullies. I know there are some people who, if they witnessed a bully situation, then they just stand there and watch. It's like they're frozen and can't move at all. Bullies have that effect on people. It's like bullies are the sun and the targets are the ice-cream, and the bullies melt our self-confidence. But it doesn't have to be. I know we can change the world for the better if we stop bullying in its tracks. We can do this! "When it is not fatal, youth violence has a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person's physical, psychological and social functioning" says "Youth Violence" from www.who.int. So, even though it's not disastrous, it does make an impact on one's life. Besides standing up to bullies, I can also tell a teacher or a trusted adult about what's going on. If you don't want to interfere with a bully, then you can just go over to a higher power, and inform them about what's going on. You might think you didn't do anything, and the adult is the only one who did something. Well, you're wrong! You *did* do something. You obstructed the situation by notifying a grown-up what's going on and now the higher power can tell the bully to stop tormenting the person. See, we can do anything! We can change the world! We can make a difference in our lives! We can stop bullying!

Nalani McCullough – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Dustin Keali'i Flores



A Flock of Birds

Youth Violence is a major problem that children all over the world experience and are subjected to everyday. One big part of youth violence is bullying, many kids have experienced it, seen it, or even been a bully themselves. One of the earliest memories I have of bullying is when I was in kindergarten, I remember seeing a girl who was in my class being taunted by four other girls. She was crying and asking them to stop but they didn't until a teacher told them to. I had not even bothered to help that little girl. I had thought that it wasn't my problem and that someone else could deal with it.

When I got into the first grade, I learned firsthand how harmful bullying can be. There was a girl who was in front of me when my class lined up. Every day she'd elbow me hard in my side. I started getting bruises from it, but I didn't tell anyone it was happening. Later, that same year, a group of girls began to spread rumors about me and taunt me at recess. While I was in the bathroom one day, they came in and started to kick the stall I was in. When I finally unlocked the stall, a girl slapped me. I stood there shocked; I didn't know why I was getting treated that way. There was also another girl in the bathroom who saw all of it happen, she just looked down and left. I stayed in the bathroom for thirty minutes after that, just crying and frustrated at that girl for not doing anything to help me. This type of treatment continued throughout first and second grade, the group of girls would bully me every day. Teachers and students would turn a blind eye and act as if nothing had happened. I had no friends to stand up for me, and I began to hate everyone for being witnesses to my torment yet not doing anything to stop it or help me.

Then, when I was in third grade, I decided that I wasn't going to let anyone push me around. I became a bully. I threatened kids everyday and would say hurtful things to them. I got in trouble that year for threatening the group of girls that had bullied me that I would pummel them. Another time, I got in trouble for punching a girl and making her hit her head on the back of a pole. I got suspended for saying horrible things about my own brother. My own family, the only people I could trust to help and protect me, I hurt too. I didn't realize what I had become until a girl that I picked on every day began to not show up at school. When she did show, she cried and begged our teacher to go home. That summer before entering fourth grade, I realized that I still had no friends. Instead of not knowing why, I knew it was because kids at school feared me because of the things I had done to other people. I vowed to never be that way again.

"Whenever one person stands up and says, 'wait a minute, this is wrong' it helps other people to do the same."-Gloria Steinem. Bullying often continues because no one speaks up and tries to stop it. Maybe it's because they're scared or maybe because they don't see it as their problem. But even though bullying may not seem to be affecting you, it is. It affects everyone. At one time or another in their life. People should treat other with kindness and understand that even if you don't know that person being bullied, you can still help them. According to StopBullying.gov, when bystander intervene 57% of the time bullying stops within ten seconds. Bullying can cause people to want to take their own lives. A person being bullied to

the point where they can't see any other way out besides death, should never happen. But it does, every day. To kids in different schools, all over the world.

We can all do our part to prevent bullying, by standing up either for others or for ourselves. We can learn to treat everyone with kindness, even if we don't like them. Every time someone stands up for someone else, that's one step closer to stopping bullying. If we can have kindness and understanding in our hearts those kids who struggle to stay strong and prevail won't have to fight by themselves. It's like a flock of birds, they travel in groups to fight wind resistance. It's much harder for a single bird to go against the wind. It goes the same for a student. It's harder for a student to fight against bullying by themselves, than if they had a group of students helping them. We can stop youth violence if we fly together and push against bullying. Just like a flock of birds pushing against the wind. And one day, we will reach our destination.

Cole McIntyre – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Kaylee Dunn



Utah youth violence

Violence, violence is like a puzzle you can either give up on it and never beat that challenge, or you can overcome that challenge and beat it. It is just like youth violence you have two choices, we can either block our way from progressing further through life, or we can find a way to get past it. But it is on you, it is how you act to get past the challenge you're facing.

For us to speak out on youth violence we first got to know what it is and how it affects our youth today. The definition of youth violence is youth violence refers to violence occurring between youths, and includes acts that range from bullying and physical fighting, through more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide. You can probably understand that really well it is not hard to follow along with. But is there another form of youth violence? I think it can be as most emotionally than physically. There's a saying, sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can really hurt me. That saying shows that words can be more hurtful than physical actions. Spreading rumors about someone, can make that person want to have suicidal thoughts, and or lower their self esteem. It can change their life forever, and often leads them into harming themselves.

This one kid that I knew he was about three years old and his parents got divorced which was heartbreaking going house to house, not having a dad and a mom that loved you in the same house, knowing that your dad and mom don't like each other anymore. But that little boy it was different they got divorced because his dad was an addict. An addict they can't do a lot about that, drugs can change that person's life forever and for that reason he lost his family lost his job lost his house, and most importantly his 3 year old boy. So then he never had a Dad he never saw him again. Than my mom found the love of her life.

That boy is now 12 years old and he came home one day and his aunt, mom, and grandpa were all sitting there and my mom was a little teary eyed. They told him to sit down and he did and they said do you remember your dad very much. And he said kind of why, they said well he passed away today he was shocked. He fell off of a crane and he died. The kid was really sad because now he will never see his dad again alive, or never get to do something with him. Than going to his funeral was the worst day of his life. It was so weird to see him he says, that was the first time in years he got to see him. When at the funeral you could see his new friends and you could tell what he got himself into they were not the best of people they did not make the best choices.

That boy was me, one year ago my dad passed away, I still think it is weird that I never had that role model to look up to, but my role model today is my step dad and grandpa. Stories like mine happen to 10's of thousands of kids today, I know and they know what it is like to be torn inside and out. I went through some pretty tuff stuff at such a young age. But one thing is for sure since I found out my dad has past I had fire in my soul and body to try my hardest at everything get good grades good education, so I don't have to live the life he had to live. There's sadly some kids who had to go through some of these experiences and turn into more violent people because what people have done to them.

Some parents might say well my kids are fine they are not going through anything, they have good grades, on a good sports team. They might be good on the outside but some are fighting PTSD, Depression, Anxiety, Phobic Disorder, and Schizophrenia. It can be as easy at school if someone says that they are stupid. They can experience one of these disorders. Well it affects you, more than 200,000 homicides appear on to youth ten to twenty nine years of age. These were just the people who were harmfully beaten. It matters to you because these kids that are getting broken down are some day going to be the leaders of the world. It matters to you parents because it's not my child it's your child thats getting bullied, its your child who comes home crying because someone called him a name, it is your child who is getting verbally abused by a teacher, it is your child...

So what are we going to do about it you may ask? Well the first step is to recognize the problem which thats why your parents need to be involved. Your parents have to be involved in what you do at school and what's going on in daily life. They can't just sit back and let you do it all, because your child can be going through some really tough stuff at school or at home. The next step is to eliminate any negative influences on you, don't talk to those school bulllys, don't get involved with the kids that sell drugs. The last step is get your kids involved in after school activities so they have something to do and get them a hobby. We need to end violence at home, we need to end drug abuse, and we need to end our prejudice. This will not be fixed overnight, it might not be fixed in a couple years, but at some point youth violence will end. All of this stuff will help drastically with this issue when we do it!

Matthew Moser – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Ashley Hauber



Our words

Our words are powerful. One word can make a person's day, or it could destroy it. When I was in elementary school, I was a bully. I would brag about how good I was at math, or I'd cheat at games. Probably the worst thing I could do though, wasn't cheating, or bragging, it was talking down to other kids. I could see, whenever I insulted anyone, I could see their faces fall. I could see how much my one comment was wearing on them. I stopped talking down after a while, but I could still tell how much of an impact I had on them. Sometimes I was talked down to by others, as well. Sometimes it was some of the kids I had talked down to, and other times it was someone else. Each time, even though I knew it was not true, I could not help but think if it was true. I then knew what they had felt like when I had talked down to them, and it hurt.

Youth violence in my opinion is anything that is comparing yourself to others and acting in a negative way about it. If you are a popular kid in school, and you are thinking that you might be better than anyone else, That could be youth violence. You never know what your one comment might do to someone. Maybe your comment will be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Maybe they are one step away from the ledge, or their breaking point, your comment might be the gust of wind that pushed them off. Youth violence is a very serious issue today. If we can stop it now, we might be able to stop some major event in the future. Some people's breaking point might be a lot closer than others. Where I live, Youth violence might be even more colossal than other places in the US. Just last year there were multiple suicide attempts, and a lot of them succeeded. One of my family member's Co-workers were one of the people who succeeded. A lot of this could have been from youth violence, And you never know. One person who seems to be the most happy in the world could be hiding pain and silently suffering behind that seemingly unbreakable wall of kindness and happiness. You will never know the circumstances someone is in.

This year, In my school, we started a campaign. It is called the Choose Kind campaign. Every month or so we get a challenge to "Choose Kind" Maybe it's meet someone new, or maybe it is to give a random positive comment to someone in the halls. We can help prevent youth violence with this challenge or challenges like it. I know that it has had an impact on people's day, week, month, year, and maybe even life. Through "Choosing Kind" we can have a positive influence on someone's life. Maybe instead of blowing them off the edge, or going past the breaking point, we can lift their burden, or blow them away from that cliff by saying something nice instead. You can never know what someone may be hiding. You will never know if they are one comment away from being blown off that cliff.

Not all of us are perfect. In fact, none of us are perfect. We need to accept that and start to help each other to start being better. Most of why people make bad choices later is because they were impacted by someone who saw a difference and decided to tell them about it in a negative way. Maybe you will see something that is out of the ordinary or different from you, and you have nothing positive to say about it, don't say anything about it, or find something you have in common and mention that. We can't always tell what position they are in, but we for sure can find something nice to say. We need to join together and stop bullying. Whenever someone is

bullied, it gets to them. I've gone through that. The people I bullied felt that. We need to stop judging and start being positive. If we focus on the negative, we will never notice the positive. Please, if you are bullying someone, or are currently being bullied, You can get out of that, and you can help others. Maybe the bullier has been bullied, or they have grown up seeing that all around them and that is all they know. I want everyone to help others out, because if we do, that will help stop a massive chunk out of youth violence.

Joseline Pena-Suaste - 8th Grade
Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Aimee Tatton



W e w i l l t a l k
Anger, Anger, anger, it's all built up inside you
You walk along the halls full of faces
Some familiar some strange
You try to hide it
Keep that smiley face and joyful tone
But the slightest inconvenience might just set you off
Tick, tick, tick and no tock
It's all the same
The anger grows and grows until you cannot stand it anymore
Tick, tick, tick, and no tock
To your left you spot them
You hate them so much
Or at least you think you do
But specially at that moment
When you can't think straight and
Your values become invisible to you
You don't even give yourself a chance to reflect
You don't care. You hate them. You hate them.
The rocket ship that was set on top of your head blasts off
It just had to have that timer
You finally stop thinking about everything else
And think about the person you're about to throw your anger at
And not even for the reason you think it is
Or could it be?
One thing just doesn't go your way for once
Or someone said something about you and
you couldn't even bare having anyone dislike you
Not. even. one. bit.
That's just your head
That's how you may think
Maybe it feels like nothing ever goes your way
And you're just so tired of it

Or maybe you just feed off the attention and "support" from your
"friends"

That motivates you to do something so meaningless

At least you'll get all the attention, right??

At least your name will scatter through the classrooms from people's
mouths to ears

At least you get to have your seconds of pride because you got the
bigger hit

It was all worth it!

They r e a l l y learned now.

Unable to control yourself

You're unable to think of a solution

A reasonable one.

Or you just think it's cool

It' not.

Hurting others while you

Also hurt yourself.

It's all dumb. The way it works in many of our minds

The way many of us think it is.

School does not teach everything about life

It gives us skills, knowledge and experience

Yet it's still not perfect

Talk to the adults

Go to them

Trust them.

You may think they won't understand

But they will

They've been through it

They've had the same young mind as you

The same young spirit and experiences

Believe it or not most of them understand

You have whatever it takes to end all the nonsense

and it's just a couple of simple steps

Talk to the trusted adults

Find the assistance you need to solve the problem
Yes, your mind is young
But that does not mean you get to pick on others
Or put them in danger
So, help us understand our own heads
So, we could seek assistance instead of hurting others
We want to rid this world of violence
So, help us because you do too
You don't want your child
To put anyone in danger
You don't want them to ruin their lives
You don't want them to hurt themselves
So, help us
Help Sam understand that their body does not determine who they are
Because they aren't just that fat kid in the class
They are so much more and don't have to change
Anything unless they're putting themselves in danger
Or genuinely wants to change
Then help them get what she needs to get to a size
Where they could feel beautiful and be it for themselves and no one
else
One where she could be healthy
So, they won't turn their self-hatred into
Anger that could put others in danger
Help Addison understand that they're dying
By starving and not breaking their fast
They're weak and unhealthy
They strive for that 15-inch waist
Bullying them for it only seems to make it stronger
Because that's how their brains work
Help them.
Because they are angry too

Help turn their anger into love for themselves
So, they won't assure violence on them or anyone

Help Cameron understand that they are worth so, so much
More than they think, than they are constantly told
Cameron just wants to feel love
And you don't even know that because they
Hide it every damn passing day
They hurt, they don't know they are loved
They're never really assured
So, they feel hate for many people
They may wish pain for others

Help Jesse understand that their addiction is dangerous
And isn't only hurting them
Anyone could be blind and
Not even know that it's there
They can't stop and they wont
Until they've built up enough anger
Enough to act on it
And hurt others
There are overloading amounts
Of problems that many have
Many that bring violence onto everyone
Not just bullying
And it has affected everyone
It has affected them, it has affected you
And it has affected me
I get to see my peers suffer
I get to stand up front
Or behind the screen watching
My peers as they throw their fists at each other
As they let each other bleed

As they continue to follow their own arrogance
As well as the other's
I get to stand up front
As they bring guns up to each other's heads
As they let each other hurt
As well as their family
I get to stand up front
As they hurt each other's feelings
As they bring each other down
Even the ones we thought we could trust
Have inflicted this violence onto us
We would like to see world
Where none of this exists amongst our youth
But if you want that world
We should all work on our communication
On our timing, on our understanding, on remembering our values
Then, will we see our world as the home it should be
Because a home is where anyone should feel safe

Ethan Strang – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Kelly



One day

**There once was a boy named John.
He was bullied and taunted
All day long.
But still he carried on.
There once was a boy named John.
He was made fun of a lot
but didn't give it much thought
And once again he carried on.
There once was a boy named John.
He was getting to a breaking point
But kept on the path
And still he carried on.
There once was a boy named John.
Again and again
He was bullied without end
And could not carry on.**

How has youth violence affected my life? Well... This boy was my friend. He was bullied non stop at school, he felt alone. He would sit at the lunch table alone. He would not have any friends to partner up with during group projects. That was the main word, alone. Eventually, this led to depression. This boy went into therapy but felt like it wasn't helping him. Still he felt alone. He came home crying the next day. He told his parents about how every second of every minute of every hour of every day is hard on him and how no one loves him. About how he could not carry on. His parents didn't know what to do about it. About how their baby boy is thinking about killing himself. About how their baby boy felt alone, and was alone.

**There once was a boy named John.
That was it, he could not take it anymore.
That was it...
That was it...
He was done.
There once was a boy named John.
He grabbed the knife
From the kitchen drawer.
He was done.
There once was a boy named John.**

**He stared at the knife for hours
In his room.
He was done.**

This boy could not take the pain he suffered every day of his life anymore. He just couldn't. That call he got before he was going to kill himself saved his life. The call was from me. I didn't know what was happening until it already happened. Just before it all fell apart, I talked to him. I told him it is not over and that there is people in this world who loved him. Even though he has heard that over a million times, it felt different coming from what seemed to be his first friend in a while. I told him that whenever he needs to come over and talk I was there.

Feeling left out. Getting picked on, physically, mentally, and now through a screen. These are the things that end youth lives over the past years. They might be "joking" or "I wasn't serious", but they don't know how it feels until it happens to them, till it happens to that boy who almost ended his life that day. "What are the causes of youth violence?" Youth violence and bullying is like a virus. And as you know viruses spread and sometimes kill the host. With bullying, bullying spreads far and fast. One kid starts to bully another and then that kid who was bullied, bullies a different kid and so on and so forth. My point is that people are all wired to follow one another and in some way copy one another. Such as in Middle School, if a group of kids all where the same brand of clothing, then the rest of the kids will where that brand of clothing and then that brand of clothing will become "cool" to where or "popular". If one kid does not where that "popular" brand of clothing then they will be picked on or left out because they are in some way different. Right there is the problem. That is what causes youth violence. That kid who is different, like John. He gets picked on and teased, he gets teased so much to a point that he might do something harmful to himself. But little does the antagonist know that boy who was bullied, his parents might be in debt, little do they know that his mom might have cancer and is going to die in a few weeks and his dad might be working two part-time jobs just to pay for the medical bills. And then just to top it all off... He is being bullied at school because they don't have the same clothes, or shoes, or doesn't act the same, or is in some way different. That shouldn't matter.

**What can I do about youth violence? The real question is, "What can WE do about youth violence?" Trying to change a problem as big as youth violence is not a one person job. It isn't just giving someone a smile every once in a while. It is the whole community putting aside their differences and making an effort to put themselves out there and make someone's day and be their friend. It might sound easier than it looks but that should not change anything. But what I can do, what we can do, is look for people who are feeling left out and become their friend. Put ourselves out there. Make a change. Cause one day, it will matter. One day, you could stop youth violence. One day,
One day.**

Lexy Torres – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kim Irvine



Reflections of Me

Imagine you're in a school. What do you see? People, rushing down the halls to get to their next class. Kids being nice to one another. Happy faces. What any normal school would have, right? This isn't entirely true. Most people are actually suffering, and you don't even know it.

About two years ago, I met my now step sister, Brenda. My parents were divorced and we were meeting my now step dad's daughter. Right away we became best friends. We call each other twin because, well we are the same age and we get along really well. Being the same age and all, she's taught me a lot, things I didn't think I would need to know.

We always laugh together, about the dumbest things. It was like we were blood sisters. We always tell each other everything. At least I thought so. About one year after meeting--my mom and step dad were living together-- she was texting someone, so I asked her about it. She said it was someone named Diana. Thing is, she didn't say it normally. She said it like "*Dianaaaa*". I swore she had like heart eyes. So I asked her, if this was like a friend. Her words exactly were, "Umm, more like, a crush". Then we sat down, and she told me about her being lesbian.

She also told me, about her being bullied for it. She would just be walking down the halls and someone would shout something hurtful. This was almost everyday. I didn't even know about this, for a year. It didn't stop here.

It was a just a normal summer day. We were at my dad's old house because we were just cleaning it out. My sisters —Brenda, Kaylee— and I were just in the house laughing and talking. What any kid would do. Then we found some scissors "Woah, these are so sharp you could cut yourself with them" I said. "Um, I actually have, multiple times, on purpose" said Brenda. This actually surprised me. She was the person I would least expect to do something like cutting. She was always so happy, smiling, dancing. Now with all this cogitation I didn't even realize she left the room. "She's probably in the bathroom" I thought. About ten minutes passed, and I see her walking towards me with a paper in her hand. She lays it out on the table in front of me and walks into the kitchen. I open the paper and the most horrible things filled the entire page. "Nobody likes me" "I cut" "I'm lost" "I am a GAY slut" Over and over these were written and more. I was very confused. I went into the kitchen where she

was, I walked in and I saw her, knife to her stomach, tears in her eyes, ready to end it all.

Then I remembered what my mom said "If someone is going to hurt themselves or someone else, don't get involved, it will make things worse for you" I didn't listen, I couldn't listen. This was my sister about to end her life because she was lost. "Brenda, put down the knife" I said. "No, I'm not needed. No one will miss me. No one will even remember I was gone." I then went up to her and put my hand on her shoulder. "You will be missed you have so much ahead of you." She dropped the knife and fell to the ground, sobbing. It was over, and she was safe.

People don't really think about youth violence as often as you should. We have gotten so used to it. It became the "newest trend". This isn't good. People are hurting, they are depressed. To them the only escape is death. Youth violence isn't just bullying. It's so much more. Youth violence is someone hurting themselves or others. Do to, basically anything. One hurtful word. Bullying. Being lost. My own sister almost killed herself, because she was alone, and lost.

She'd always tell me how she thinks our dad isn't proud of her, because she's gay. That's a big problem. People don't have anyone to go to. Most of us are lost. Most of us are alone. So it all comes back to that one word, suicide.

I used to be close
With the girl in the mirror
She was so happy and bright
But those simple, hurtful words
Wanted to make her end her life
She's a dead slate grey flower
In this beautiful garden of a world.

**"No one cares
I won't be missed"**
She cries and cries
So now when I look
In the mirror...
She is no longer there
We used to be close
The girl and I
I miss her bright, energetic soul

We all have a power. It's the same power. To change the world. According to The Suicide Prevention Resource Center “**between 5 and 10%** of LGBT youth, depending on age and sex groups, have attempted suicide, a rate **1.5-3 times** higher than heterosexual youth.” “ Youth’s suicide rate has shot up 46.5% since 1999” says The Salt Lake Tribune. We can change this! We can just smile. Compliment someone. We can help more people like my sister. It’s okay to be yourself. “To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people just exist”. A little bit of effort, on your part, can have a **BIG** impact on someone else’s life.

Guadalupe Velazquez – 8th Grade
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan



January 28th, 2018

Dear Diary,

Today at school Mrs. T found Emmet having an epilepsy seizure in the bathroom. You know? Like the ones we learned about in health last week? Yesterday I saw Toby hustling drugs from his plug and doing as he's told, so little did you know that he's distributing drugs to kids just to help his mama pay the bills since his pops decided to walk out of their life. Toby would rather skip school and go tag the enemy's side with a couple of homies, taking the risk of getting shot up. Every day he wakes up and prays to god, asking him to give him the hope and faith to keep going and help him go "make some bread." Every morning when his mother wakes up, she prays that her son doesn't end up 6 ft. underground like his brother did. She feels that her son is going down the wrong path like his brother before she lost him. She begs god to give her the strength and esperanza (hope) to keep going and bring food to the table and have a roof over her little boy. Toby's mom Maria doesn't know that he has bad attendance, so when the school calls her and asks her why he hasn't been going to school she says, "Lo siento no entiendo" (Sorry I don't understand).

While I was walking home from school, I saw a couple walking and a car pull up. Then there was a guy shouting, and out of nowhere he pulled out his strap and shot the guy right in the head. Before the guy left speeding away, he said, "This is RP homie 116." The lady was lucky that the guy didn't have a green light put out on her. I was there to witness it all, but what's odd is that I wasn't scared. Is it a bad thing? Or is it because at this point I'm used to these types of shootings in my neighborhood? Are my feelings numb at this point, where I'm like, "Oh cool, that happened again?" Ugh, who knows? One of my teachers once told me, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that." Since then that quote has been with me. When I got home from school, I turned on the TV, changed the channel, and guess what I saw? I saw the president giving a speech, saying that us Latinos are rapists, drug dealers, and we steal their jobs. That he'll "Make America Great Again." What is that supposed to mean? Are we all like that? Or is that just labels that "our" president is putting on us brown people? Should we start accepting those labels that people are putting on us? No, WE SHOULD NOT. We should be able to identify ourselves how we should want, too. Why should we listen to some guy that doesn't know what we've been through? He hasn't walked in our shoes, has he? No, EXACTLY. So, we should not be letting some guy identify us just because he's in a higher class than us.

Rant over man.

After all that, today was alright. I'm thankful that I get an education and that I'm still alive, breathing, and that I made it through another day. I don't know if I can say that about other people though.

Dear Diary, one last thing. Please don't let Toby get shot up by the enemy. I know he's made dumb decisions in the past, but he's a bright boy and he still has a life ahead of him. Please give him the strength and hope he needs.

Sincerely,

A girl that will make her mother proud and prove people wrong.

Cayleb White – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Kelly



Do the Write Thing - Youth Violence

I didn't go to bed worried about getting beat up. Or robbed. Or shot. Or assaulted. But will that always be the case? And I wondered, if one of my friends or myself could be next. Youth violence affects my life every day whether I hear about it in the news or towards someone I know or care about. I hear my parents say they had earthquake drills when they were in school not lockdowns, suicide prevention, or anti-bullying programs. When I was in kindergarten, I experienced my first lockdown due to a teenager robbing a bank not from my elementary school in Washington. Last year several kids committed suicide at the local high school where my sister goes. And I can't remember a year where we haven't talked about bullying and its effects. In my world, school lockdown drills, bully prevention and talk about the increase of youth violence is normal. But why?

A person can be a victim, offender, or witness of youth violence. Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power that is either threatened or actual harm against a person. Often it is one sided and causes pain. Many may think bullying must be physical abuse. However, I think some of the worst kind of bullying is not physical but the subtler mental and emotional bullying. I may not know someone that got shot today or beat up but everyday I hear about someone being verbally or mentally abused. The frightening part about that is I think bullying is the gateway form of youth violence. Lots of people talk about gateway drugs and how it gets worse and worse over time. I believe bullying is the start of youth violence. If I were to write about all the bullying I've witnessed over the years, it would take many pages.

I am an avid sports player and my main game is basketball. As a youth who loves sports and has played on multiple teams, I've already witnessed that making fun of others can ruin kids' lives. One personal experience that I had with youth violence was on one of the basketball teams I was playing for. I carpooled with a couple of kids who had played on a team together before and knew each other. They would often joke around with each other, but it soon seemed to be that two of the friends would without hesitation each time make fun of the other kid. At first, I didn't think much of it. But later I started noticing the friend who was being made fun of seemed to be losing interest in practices and became quieter. My coach noticed too. She pulled me aside and talked to me about the player who was getting verbally beat up and asked me to make a better effort to be a good friend and support to this player. This kid and I later became great friends and his mom talked to my mom about how much of a difference it made in this kid's life. This has affected me because maybe I have not been the one who gets bullied or hurt but, I now have a better insight of being able to help someone who has been a victim of youth violence no matter how small it starts. This example of youth violence started out as small little insults, but these insults affected this player's ability to play and focus.

I wondered why the other two players felt they had to tear down our team mate. Later I found out that these three had played soccer together, but the other two kids were not as good

of soccer players as he was, and they were cut from the team. I don't know for sure, but I think a reason these kids were so rude to our team mate was because they were jealous. They were insecure. Youth violence can be caused by many things. Abuse at home, self-esteem issues, or peer pressure or following poor social norms. I think a lot of the time people engage in youth violence because it's amusing or makes them feel more superior. It is the background knowledge that we need to know about others to better understand the why behind their actions before it escalates. I believe it is important to never be bullied into silence and never accept someone else's definition of yourself.

I have a second cousin that went from being bullied because he was mentally slow to getting involved with gangs and drugs and was eventually murdered a few years ago here in Salt Lake. Like my friend, it started out small but blew up to something horrible and irreversible. You may see a kid at school who always seems happy and cheerful, but you may not know that they are secretly treated horribly or are told that they are worthless. I believe that youth violence doesn't just go straight to abusing others and doing unspeakable things but that it starts out with something small that will expand. I may not have the power to stop all youth violence, but I do know that I can help those around me. It can be something as small as smiling at the kid you sit by in class or simply complimenting someone that day. Though small acts like this may seem insignificant it may mean the world to this one person. Mother Teresa said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." By working to have safe environments, a positive atmosphere at home, in schools and communities, and trying to be your best self-everyday, it can help reduce youth violence.

Ryan White – 7th Grade
Draper Park Middle School – Teacher, Kimberly Carter



YOUTH VIOLENCE - EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE

Violence is the act of harming someone or something physically or mentally. No matter how violence is being used, the effect is the same. Whether it be constant teasing, threatening, or even physical abuse, the outcome is always negative. Violence is seen throughout the world, and is being ignored. People say, "I am going to stop this," but they don't follow through with it. If we want to make a stand against youth violence, we need everyone to speak up. Violence is the cause of almost all problems the world has ever experienced, so why don't we fix what we have done, clean up our mess. A quote that stands out to me is told by a very inspiring person known throughout the world. "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only TEMPORARY; the evil it does is PERMANENT." - Mahatma Gandhi.

I first was familiarized by the effect of youth violence by my step brother. It all started about 5 years ago. My step brother has always been hard on me ever since I was a little kid. But it was getting worse. He started hurting me for no reason whatsoever. From telling me that I'm worthless, to throwing me into the wall. He just changed for some reason. The worst parts of this weird stage was the fighting. Almost every day for years, my step brother was yelling at my whole family, especially towards my parents. I remember sitting in my bed, crying with my older sister. Now, my step brother is way better, but not perfect.

My family has always been big on helping others. I became aware that people do horrifying things as an effect of youth violence. We noticed that suicide rates are steadily rising, and how the number of mass shootings in the world is growing larger. I noticed that people really do have hard lives, mainly due to youth

violence. Peer pressure, cyberbullying, bullying, environment, stress, and depression are just a few possible causes of youth violence. I chose cyberbullying to be one the main causes for youth violence. Media including instagram, snapchat, twitter, et cetera, are all open access apps where people can say whatever they want to you. This means that people can constantly say mean things to you, which really hurts inside. Victims of cyberbullying don't speak up. They feel weak and are even afraid to go to school because the people who bully them on media also bully them in school. They feel like everyone is staring at them, and that they are worthless. They wish that they could tell someone about it, but they think no one will listen. People don't understand that these types of bullying are also forms of youth violence.

Everyone is responsible for responding to the problems of youth violence. Youth can help by being aware of others, and by knowing that everyone has trials in their lives, so there is no need to punish others for any reason. They can stand up to bullies by lending a hand to those being bullied. Parents can help by caring for their children and loving them. They can ask how their day was and see if they can help in any way. Administration can help by noticing students who are acting out or looking sad. They can do something simple like having a good conversation with them. Even government can aid this massive problem, by starting anti-bullying clubs. Or paying attention on what is going on in their homes. Specifically, what *WE* can do to help our society is the most effective as far as preventing youth violence.

So what is the true meaning of violence? Is it the intention of harming someone? Is it the act of exposing cruelty to someone? Well, the answer is all of the above. Youth violence takes place every day globally. From hearing news reports on school shootings to seeing someone being bullied in the hallway, it is all around us. Imagine what the world could accomplish without violence! A world without poverty, or bullies, or depression. That is what we all want, so why don't we just try harder. Stop bullying when you see it, start anti-bullying campaigns, reach out to one another. We can prevent bullying when everyone does their part.



Utah Board of Juvenile Justice Membership

ANTHONY JOHNSON, CHAIR

*Community Representative
Ogden City*

MIKE BERG

*Chief of Police
Parowan City*

PATRICIA S. CASSEL

*Chief Juvenile Prosecutor
Summit County Attorney's Office*

MATTHEW DAVIES

*Community/Mental Health Representative
Salt Lake City*

JUDGE SUSAN EISENMAN

*Third District Juvenile Court
Salt Lake City*

CAROLYN HANSEN

*Director, Salt Lake County Youth Services
South Salt Lake*

STEVEN KAE LIN

*Director, Youth in Care
Utah State Office of Education
Salt Lake City*

NINDY LE

*Youth Chair
West Jordan*

DIEGO MARTINEZ LOPEZ

*Youth Member
Kearns*

DIANE MOORE

Director, Utah Division of Child and Family Services

MARY OLING

Youth Member

DAVID PARKER

*Director, Center for Creating Community
Salt Lake City*

BRETT PETERSON

*Director, Utah Division of Juvenile Justice Services
Salt Lake City*

SUSAN KAY PULSIPHER

*Utah House of Representative, District 50
South Jordan*

BETTY SAWYER

*Community Engagement Coordinator, Weber State
University
Ogden*

NEIRA SIAPERAS

*Utah Juvenile Court Administrator
Utah Administrative Office of the Courts*

SHIRLEE SILVERSMITH

*Director, Utah Division of Indian Affairs
Salt Lake City*

JULIE TANG

*Youth Member
Salt Lake City*

PAMELA L. VICKREY, CHAIR

Director, Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys

SOPHIA WRATHALL

*Youth Member
Salt Lake City*

Staff

CUONG NGUYEN

Juvenile Justice Specialist

LANETA FITISEMANU

DMC Coordinator

KAYLEY RICHARDS

Compliance Monitor

LENHART BROWN

Administrative Assistant



Utah Commission
on Criminal and
Juvenile Justice

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