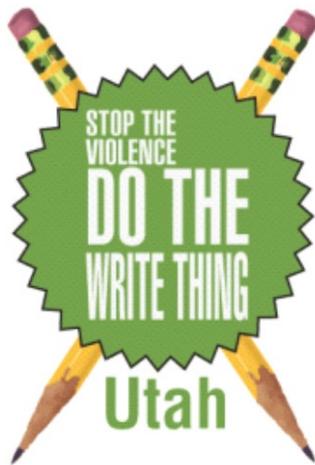


2021

Utah's Challenge to Do the Write Thing  
*Student Writings*





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**2021 Do the Write Thing VIP Judges**

**Judith Atherton**, *Retired Third District Court Judge*

Chair, Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

**Melissa Holyoak**, *Solicitor General*

Utah Attorney General's Office

**Carol Lear**, *Seventh District Board Member*

Utah State Board of Education

**Rosie Nguyen**, *Reporter*

ABC4News TV

**Patty Norman**, *Deputy Superintendent*

Utah State Board of Education

**Brian Olmstead**, *Student Support Coordinator*

Utah State Board of Education

**Sophia Parsons**

2020 DtWT National Finalist

**Julie Tang**, *Youth Chair*

DtWT Committee

UTAH'S TWENTIETH 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 (DtWT) 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 State Board of Education (USBE) and managed by the DtWT Committee and USBE's Prevention and At-Risk Program, Student Support Section. The Prevention and At-Risk Programs staff support accountability, social justice, and system practices for each student. A student-focused, data driven, systemic practice for all prevention work allows students to engage in an educational experience that results in the preparation and social capital necessary for college and career success and full participation in a global society.

The mission of our team is to work systemically to provide supports to increase student access and reduce barriers which prevent students from experiencing success in school. Prevention and At-Risk Programs provide resources and supports in the schools in the areas of attendance, bullying, child abuse, gangs, human trafficking, substance abuse, and suicide, built on a foundation of restorative practices. By promoting wellness for the whole child, this team contributes to the Utah State Board of Education's vision of preparing each child to be college, career, and community ready upon graduation.

## How the Campaign Works

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

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

How has youth violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

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

School districts reported that over 1,100 students participated in classroom discussions, 380 students wrote and submitted writings about youth violence for review. Students from the University of Utah, Weber State University, and USBE's Prevention and At-Risk Program staff participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top two writings per school. 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 State Board of Education's Prevention and At-Risk Program 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, Utah State Board of Education, University of Utah, and Weber State University.

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

# *National Finalists*

*Meaghan Peine*  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spanish Fork Jr. High  
Teacher, Chance Carter

*Cole Hales*  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spanish Fork Jr. High  
Teacher, Christine Thompson

Meaghan Peine – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Spanish Fork Jr. High – Teacher, Chance Carter



Seas of Impression  
The world, full of people with thoughts  
Not one is the same  
Words jumbled up in knots  
We all have something to claim  
In the nation, many will say,  
The youth are to blame  
Or violence is shown one way  
The victims shouldn't be the ones ashamed  
For many build their locks,  
To contain how they feel  
Soon they are in this box  
Leaving them to come up with a deal  
A plan is what was decided  
They listen to words of other's perceptions  
Believing they weren't misguided  
Living a life of misconception  
Here I am, I wonder  
How could I change to fit their demand  
For it was them I was under  
I was not that grand  
Too many voices were in my head  
All of which I almost called my own  
Carving an indent that bled  
Leaving deep scars, that would forever be known  
Their whispers don't call me by name  
Deciding a label is what I should display

In hopes I should drown in my shame  
None would come to stay  
You're a fool  
You are the one they hate  
How come you're so cruel  
You'll never elate  
The eyes you have could never compare  
For her eyes glimmer,  
With an alluring flair  
But yours only seem to dimmer  
Your hair is filled with oil  
While hers is smooth  
When they see me they recoil  
And then they think she'll only improve  
Her teeth are white with a pearly gleam  
Each tooth lined up straight  
Why is it when I smile it's too extreme  
Why try to smile at this rate  
Judgmental stares as I walk down the hall  
Have I gained more today  
It left me wondering if I should've not eaten at all  
Why should it matter what I weigh?  
Forget about the meal on your plate  
To fit in you need a slim waist,  
You have to lose weight  
Or you will be a disgrace  
But yet, you look thin, you should eat  
If you want men to be bewitched  
You can't do that without meat

Don't be the one that's ditched  
How am I supposed to meet these standards  
If they were all but phony lies  
We are not taking notice of these hazards  
You can't hear my pleading cries  
But what about the fallen youth  
Who are tired of being trapped in cages of abuse  
We are blinded by false truths  
When will you see our views  
Children are constantly in a loop  
Doesn't matter if it's depression, bullying, or peer pressure  
They take it to heart, letting no room for recoup  
For us, these marks will forever be fresher  
People are forgetting, the pain they inflict  
But isn't that common to do?  
We need to remember no one is perfect  
Still, they don't catch that clue  
The violence in this nation  
Is as common as the flu  
It leads people to devastation  
You might get caught in it too  
"What can someone like us do?"  
The population starts to regard  
If you lend an ear, you will follow through  
I will then tell you how to play that card

I shouldn't have to compare  
The things that give me my personality  
Not the clothes I wear

Neither my reality,  
It shouldn't be on how I act  
Nor the people I love  
Or if I don't make eye-contact  
I'm not someone you can shove  
The media isn't always what influences our mood  
We can use it to find an escape  
Previous generations think we are glued  
For our minds are still taking shape,  
We need to stop shifting the blame  
How would they react, teens constantly question  
They are afraid that if they stated their claim  
You would burst out with aggression  
The world we live in isn't kind  
It is filled with blood, murder, and even suicide  
Sit down and listen to what is on their mind  
They need you to lower your pride  
Some of the simplest things are the solutions  
Sparing a smile to someone you pass by  
It is your attributions  
That help them try  
Asking a stranger if they are okay  
Let's them know they aren't alone  
Helping them see the light in the day  
Realizing they are seen and known  
Being there, showing you care  
Is something they will never ask you for  
But, because of that, they are kept from despair  
The colors they see are more than before

As a friend, be someone they can trust  
As a parent let them come to your open arms  
As a sibling, help them adjust  
As a stranger, help them grin with your charms  
So much can be done  
It doesn't matter who you are  
You can do it and so can everyone  
Helping each other avoid falling so far  
And then maybe you will see how the world has thoughts  
Not a single one is the same  
We can untangle the knots  
We know your name

**Cole Hales – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Spanish Fork Jr. High – Teacher, Christine Thompson**



## Why Youth Violence?

Youth violence is a big problem in today's society. Many people are affected by youth violence. Some people unfortunately lose their lives to this type of violence. Why is violence in youth so common? Some people blame youth violence on video games. Video games are becoming more lifelike and violent. Some kids have trouble knowing what is real and what is fiction. Video games are just one cause of ongoing violence, but it's not the reason for all violence in youth. When asked as a class what the cause of youth violence is, many related it to drugs or alcohol. Some reasons why youth violence is so high are social media. Many kids are easy to criticize someone over a text or social media. They may say something about someone or something on social media they wouldn't say to that person face to face. Size comparison in one two that is with my experience

When I was growing up, I was always bigger than the other kids. I often got made fun of for my size. Well, actually I still do. I would get laughed at because I was bigger and slightly clumsy. I wasn't a fast runner and they would make fun of me so bad. They left me out a lot because of my size. No one actually was violent with me, but they bullied me quite a bit. I think because of my experience being bullied; I looked out for the little guys. I wanted to make sure others weren't getting teased like I was. One of my best friends believed it or not was half my size. He didn't care that I was bigger than him, he just wanted to hang out. I wanted to play sports with them, but I wasn't as good as them. Often I wasn't chosen at school when we played games during recess. Being the last person picked on a team hurt really bad, especially when it happened over and over. I was very tired of being called the "Slow Poke" of the 4th grade. They would say, "Hey, Slowpoke, why don't you come and chase me." so they could outrun me and mock me. They would also say this "Hey, fatty come and get me if that is not too hard for you. We moved when I was in the 4th grade. At my new school I wasn't teased, I actually fit in quite well. I actually started playing football and my size helped me, even though I really didn't want to tackle anyone. After I moved, I found out the kids that used to tease me started teasing another boy. A boy that in fact had been one of the boys teasing me. He was now on the receiving end of the teasing. That boy and I are great friends. He regrets even teasing me in the first place.

Another thing I got teased about growing up was my reading ability. I have struggled with reading and speech since kindergarten. I would get teased because I “sounded” funny. I spent many hours in speech therapy and tutoring. I was made fun of because I could read and I hated reading in front of a class. Kids thought because of my size I should be able to do anything, yet I couldn’t. Both my size and my reading abilities made me realize I needed to stick up for the small guys, the underdog. No matter how they talked, looked or their ability to play sports. I need to see people for who THEY are.

One of the solutions I feel to youth violence is talking. Talking in person, talking face to face. When you actually talk face to face, you are much kinder and have to stand behind what you say. Next, I feel we need to take action. If we see someone being bullied or hurt, we need to step up and take action. Action may come in the form of telling a teacher or an adult. You just need to do something, don’t stand back and let someone keep getting hurt. Look for ways to uplift someone each day, don’t try to drag them down.” In the TED talk we watched we were told it takes a village to raise a child, but if that village doesn’t participate in raising the child the child will burn it to look for heat. We have to be active, we have to look for ways to help. We have to reach out, speak out and take action. Maybe just maybe if we all do this we can make a difference with youth violence.

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

*Runners-Up*

*Lexie Antonino*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Diamond Fork Jr. High  
Teacher, Reilly Ryan**

*Tyson Anderson*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Syracuse Arts Academy Junior High  
Teacher, Heidi Stone**

Lexie Antonino – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Diamond Fork Jr. High - Teacher, Reilly Ryan



### Youth Violence

Violence isn't always physical, it's not always hands-on experiences, not always by the male/female figure in the house. Violence can be from ourselves, mentally violent, physically violent. Every day roughly 132 people commit suicide, the most common reason for suicide is coming from depression or being mentally violent on ourselves. This is what happened to me.

When I heard the topic of youth violence I didn't think about how physically violence the first thing that came to my mind is mental violence. All my life I have had rough issues regarding mental health. I haven't had any physically violent experiences from others. I have suffered from a few stages of cutting myself every so slightly. I was raised in a religious household, and I always tried very hard to live up to those standards in the church. As I grew older, I had more personal struggles that I had to deal with, causing me to take time from the values and standards that I once lived up to. I was diagnosed with ADHD and anxiety in second grade. After I started to fear that my dolls were going to kill me in my sleep. This came very shockingly as I absolutely loved to play with my dolls. When I would have a hard time falling asleep at night because of my sudden fear, my parents knew something was up. They took me to a child's psychologist where I was then diagnosed at age 8 with ADHD and anxiety. This took a huge toll on not only me but my parents as they were losing sleep. This was a weird time for me, I absolutely hated going to a therapist because I didn't realize how much it was going to help me in the end, I just saw all the negative things in it. I was the only one in my grade that was going to a child psychologist at age 8, and I hated not feeling like everyone else. I've come to get used to my ADHD and anxiety, but that wouldn't be the end of my mental health journey.

In the beginning of Junior High, I noticed some depression coming on. It was never horrible until March of 2020, when the world was shut down and we were stuck inside. I hated this. I was always in my room, scrolling through social media sometimes comparing myself to others. I hated the way I felt but I didn't care enough to do enough about it. I loved to hide myself away in my room, occasionally not eating as I hated knowing that I could get fat from this. It always came back to how hard I compared myself to others. I thought to myself, how come I looked like this? How come I thought like this? I always asked myself these questions without ever actually taking the time to think about the answers to them. I always just thought that there was no solution for this, I was going to be stuck like this forever.

Depression is the most common mental health issue in teens 15-24. Most people mistake depression as being sad, depression is a type of sadness but it's different from being sad. Sadness is a normal reaction to a loss, disappointment, problems, or other difficult situations. Feeling sad from time to time is just another part of being human. In these cases, feelings of sadness go away quickly and you can go about your daily life. Depression is a mental illness that affects your mood, the way you understand yourself, and the way you understand and relate to things around you. Depression can come up for no reason, and it lasts for a long time. It's much more than sadness or low mood. People who experience depression may feel worthless or hopeless. They may feel unreasonable guilt. Some people may experience depression as anger or irritability. Most people lose interest in things that they used to enjoy and may isolate themselves from others. Some may experience difficult thoughts about death or ending

their life (suicide). Depression lasts longer than two weeks, doesn't usually go away on its own, and impacts your life. It's a real illness, and it is very treatable.

These days I think a lot about social media when I think about reasons kids have depression. Kids are spending roughly 6-9 hours a day on social media. When I am on social media, I find myself comparing myself to others. When I compare myself to others, I tend to find myself in a depressed state. But there are so many steps we can take in order to help prevent the spread of this social media spread that leads to common youth violence. Parents should set time limits on their kids' phones, especially on social media. I have a limit and a password on my phone. My mom and I set this on my phone just a couple weeks ago, as I found my depression getting worse and worse. I have definitely been able to tell a difference. Depression numbers are rising, as more social media platforms come out. I think that the biggest cause of youth violence mentally is from social media. So if we lower the amount of time we are on it, and raise the age of getting a phone. Then we will find our numbers of suicide, depression, youth violence mentally and physically going down.

A community can help reduce youth violence physical and mental violence on youth by simply loving each other. Depression causes you to isolate yourself from others, those we isolate ourselves from should not let us become alone. A community simply can help the mental side of youth violence, but listening to the signs of depression and taking it seriously. Tell someone. Suicide is not a joke, and it needs to be taken way more seriously. The communities can help reduce physical violence by reporting any signs of abuse. We will never be able to control youth violence, but maybe my one story will help others understand it more.

This is my story, but it is not the end, only just the beginning of it.

**Tyson Anderson – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Syracuse Arts Academy Junior High – Teacher, Heidi Stone**



### **Youth Violence**

Have you noticed the amount of youth violence around you? You will be surprised by how much there is. 80% of violent crimes are committed by youth 14 through 24 years old. Youth violence stems from such things as; drugs, abuse, and video games. It affects all of us no matter what the involvement, and we can all do something to help prevent it.

I believe that one of the main causes of youth violence comes from the influence of drug use. A lot of the time when youth are violent it is because they are under the influence of drugs which can mess with their brain causing them not think properly. When I was in sixth grade and our teachers let us go to the park across the street from the school for a break. The park had a lot of big trees. While there me and my friends were playing when we saw some smoke coming from behind one of the trees. My friend went over to investigate and found two girls vaping. The girls told him not to tell anyone, but he went and told me and our friends. We decided to go to our most trusted teacher and told him about the girls vaping. The teacher walked over to the girls to try to escort them back inside the school. The girls would not go with him and started pulling away and yelling at our teacher. Because the girls would not go inside and were being so violent the firefighters, who were there because of another incident, had to bring the girls inside. Because of the drugs that messed with the girls brains, it made them act more violently than they may have normally acted. At school my teachers are always telling me not to do drugs and so do my parents and church leaders, they do this so we can stay safe, have peace, and enjoy life.

The people youth decide to be friends with can also contribute to if they behave violently. Friends, family, and other close contacts really shape and influence how we behave and the kind

of person we will become. Some children grow up with parents that often beat them or things around them. Unfortunately, these kids start to behave the same way, beating up on things or others around them because they don't know how else to act, that's all they have been taught. Friends affect your life just as much as family does. Often times youth are introduced to drugs or convinced to do other stupid things by their friends. Some of the stupid things that friends decide to do together sadly include bullying others either socially, physically or etc. It is when youth give into friends ideas, or don't stand up for what is right that the violence comes out and gets out of hand. Thankfully, friends and family can also influence us in good ways as well. If people have a friend or family member struggling with violent behavior they can try to help them by calling out their bad behavior and helping learn how to change.

Video games are fun, but some have a lot of violence in them. Playing a lot of these types of games can alter people's brains and make them confused about what is real life and what is not. Leland Yee said, "playing of violent video games by children and youth increase aggressive thought and behavior; increase antisocial behavior and delinquency; engender poor school performance; desensitize the game player to violence." Limiting the time spent playing these type of video games can help prevent youth from acquiring violent behavior.

Hearing about many different shootings, bullying, and other youth violence problems on the news and other media has affected me in the way I feel and act when I'm in certain public places. One time I was outside a theater waiting for my grandma. While I was standing there I noticed some scary people that looked just a little older than I was. When I saw them I decided to go inside the building to wait instead where I felt safer. I was worried that those people might hurt me or something. It is hard to feel safe and not worry when there are so many people out there that struggle with violent behavior.

We can all do our part to help extinguish youth violence. The first step always is with ourselves. We must take a look at our own actions and make sure that we are not part of the problem. Second, we can reach out to friends, family, and others we know who struggle with violence, whether it is being a victim of youth violence or performing violent acts. We can offer these youth help and love in recovering. Third, we must stand up and speak out on youth violence and drug use. We need to form groups and teams to stand up against the bad behavior and hold those who are violent accountable for their actions. We need to help make a change.

In the end, youth violence is a very dangerous thing and ruins many people's lives. If people would think more and learn how to stay under control of what they are doing things will be a lot better in this world and people will be so much happier. We can all look out for each other and be the better good. Youth violence needs to stop and that starts with each one of us controlling ourselves first.

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



# *State Finalists*

*Lucy Bamfo*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Roy Junior High  
Teacher, Dustin Flores

*Kendall Boden*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Katherine Cance

*Bridger Boulton*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Roy Junior High  
Teacher, Dustin Flores

*Braden Brown*

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

*Tyler Cole*

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

*James Cole Noorda*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Summit Academy Draper  
Campus  
Teacher, Kim Arminen

*Caleb Eyre*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Katherine Cance

*Zoey Grange*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Roy Junior High  
Teacher, Maria Georgiou

*Kendra Jones*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Summit Academy Draper  
Campus  
Teacher, Kim Arminen

*Kyle Keck*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Summit Academy Independence  
Teacher, Debra Wallace

*Maddie Kenner*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Hurricane Intermediate School  
Teacher, Susan Wiese

*Simeon Kumar*

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

*Katie Lin*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Syracuse Arts Academy Junior  
High  
Teacher, Heidi Stone

*Isabelle McCullough*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Summit Academy Independence  
Teacher, Debra Wallace

*Herlinda Nava*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Anne Salisbury

*Isaac Navarro*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Anne Salisbury

*Raylee Nielsen*

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

*Raeley Pace*

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

*Dylan Rawe*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spanish Fork Jr. High  
Teacher, Chance Carter

*Kaylee Woodruff*

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

Lucy Bamfo– 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Dustin Flores



Stuck in the Mud

I've never once wondered what it would be like to be them.

Until now.

I've never been the one who was bullied, harassed, or picked on.  
My family has been nothing but kind, my friends love me and I love them  
back.

But I know that life hasn't been kind to everyone.

I know of those who have suffered unimaginable realities because of  
gender, race, religion, or circumstance.

Some have been harassed by others, and many suffer pain only from  
themselves.

My heart breaks when they confide in me. Showing me their bruises and  
scars.

Shining a light through the window of their lives so that I can see.

I'm speechless.

I search for comforting words but can find none because I will never know  
their pain.

My mind frantically searches for a way to fix their problems but they stop  
me. Telling me that it's not worth the trouble. My heart wants to scream  
that it is, because they all matter, so much, to me.

One friend was so much more. She carved her name into my heart. She once  
showed me a book full of terrifying thoughts.

She said writing them made them seem so much further. But they weren't.

I wanted to do something but felt so helpless. How had I not noticed the  
pain in her eyes. The cuts on her arms. And the darkness that surrounded  
her.

I had been oblivious to her need for love and acceptance.

And I too ignored her plea for help.

From then on I vowed that I would never let someone, anyone, in need be  
unseen.

Afterwards, I noticed so much more. The young girl who had bruises from a  
boy who every day broke her, emotionally and physically. A boy who felt he  
had to watch his back for fear he would soon die at the hands of a stranger.

And myself, drowning in a false reality where violence was the only way

out.  
Loved ones tried to save me with advice, hope filled words, and therapy but  
it was in vain.  
I felt lost. My words were knives. My stare was a loaded gun. And my actions  
were lit dynamite.

Was this how it was going to end? Me and others forever stuck in the  
marshes of violence?

I refused. I knew that this could not be the end.  
Slowly I made my way out of the muck with spiritual and emotional  
guidance from sought out mentors and higher powers.  
Slowly, inching my way out of the terrible state I was in.  
It worked.

My, what seemed like a lifetime of misery, was over. Finally I could feel  
the sun on my face, the breeze through my hair, and the rain on my skin. But  
then I remembered them.

My fellow companions in neverending strife. I turned to see if they had  
followed but no. Most were still stuck and some had sunk even further and  
looked ready to give up.

No, I thought. This was not how any of us were going to end. I approached  
those I could reach, throwing them branches of empathy and hope. Most I  
helped drag out of the muck but others were still stuck.

"Just leave me," they would say, "I'm not important anyway."

My sheltered world of books and superheroes had not prepared me for this.  
In no story I had ever read had it told me how to save these people. "No," I  
would say, "You are important, so very important. Someone loves you, I love  
you. Please."

But my cries fell on deaf ears. They refused to listen, saying that I was just  
like the rest who had failed them. Failing to protect them from  
persecution, darkness, and abuse of every kind.  
Their words pierce my heart. How could I think I could save them? I'm just a  
fool who has never educated myself in the pains of others.

I fall to my knees, watching them drift further into the mud.  
Accepting that this will become normalcy for the rest of their life.  
My eyes fill with tears imagining all the wonderful things that they could  
be. Poetic scholars, loving parents to children, comforting friends, and

even heroes to the world.

A spark of hope sends a warm feeling throughout my body as I stand. Rising up. Refusing to let this muck take the future of the world into its dark depths.

I reach for the nearest victim, a girl who feels as though the world has overlooked her.

I touch her shoulder and she turns. "You may not think you're important, beautiful, or strong," I say, tears spilling out of my weary eyes, "But I do.

And that's something. You are not nothing, you're the most amazing something I have ever seen. And I love you for every decision and mistake you've made. Let me show the world how much you matter."

Her eyes clear as she takes my hand. Together. Together we make our way out of the muck.

When we reach the shore she embraces me. "Thank you," she says, "Thank you for seeing me."

Now I know I can't save everyone of you. Even if I love you so very much. Just know, you are never too far into the mud. You may slip back in, but you can always get out again.

If you want help all you have to do is ask.

Never accept the wrong things that people do to you. We may not know what you're going through but we only see what you show us. So show us.

Show us your scars. Show us your bruises. Show us your burns. Show us you. You are never less than someone and don't let anyone tell you different.

Discrimination is still discrimination regardless of the mask it wears. Whether you're a different race, gender, LGBTQ, or different in any way, shape, or form you are wonderful. And I love you for who you are.

**Kendall Boden – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Butler Middle School - Teacher, Katherine Cance**



Sexual Abuse and Assault

I believe that there is a major problem with sexual assault/abuse among youth today. Young girls and boys have this happening to them everyday, and nothing happens to help them. How has this affected my life? I was sexually assaulted, and the boy who did it, got no consequences, all he did was switch classes. I was confronted during a class, and now I see him everyday at school, knowing what he did to me and other girls. Now, I'm so lucky that I only got touched inappropriately and that was the end of it. It has been a year or two and I'm so incredibly lucky. Sexual abuse can drive some to suicide. 66% percent of kids between the ages of 12-17 are assaulted and abused every year, and between boys and girls 1 in 9 girls are assaulted and abused and only 1 in 53 boys are assaulted and abused. The statistics also show that "82% of all victims under 18 are female", a lot of these statistics are at the hands of adults, but what can we do as children?

A lot of trauma comes from sexual assault/abuse. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression and anxiety often come from trauma related to abuse. What can we do to see the warning signs of someone being abused? Some warning signs are your grades and attendance dropping, not wanting to be touched by family, friends, etc. Those are just some of the signs with younger children who are being sexually assault, teens the ages of 12-34 are most likely to get assaulted, self harm, commit suicide, and have grades dropping are most common for teens.

What is the cause of sexual assault? Some articles say that sexual predators come from different causes. Trauma of their own, the feeling of "power", sexual gratification and other physiological factors relating etc. Some small minded individuals might say "it's the victim's fault, they are asking for it" and that is absolutely preposterous, it is NEVER the victim's fault and they should never be blamed for others. Recently, more and more victims have come forward and getting justice, and more and more offenders are getting put away .

What can we do about this type of youth violence? We have to watch the signs, sometimes this sort of thing can be happening at school or home or activities etc. It's important that we give students resources to come forward and feel comfortable to speak up. Our age group is the most likely to get raped, and few report it. We need to cover more topics like this in school, we can't censor kids from the truth and we need to know that if we are in a dangerous situation, we have resources in school.

In conclusion, we as a community and a school, need to reach out to our students about sexual abuse and assault. Not enough kids are aware of the serious danger they or others around them could be in. We need to recognize the emotional trauma that comes after this sort of pain for our youth and show that the world isn't just how we perceive it to be.

**Bridger Boulton – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Roy Junior High – Teacher, Dustin Flores**



How does youth violence affect our society today?. It is a big thing today, in our town, and in the world. It can happen in many different ways like fighting, bullying, cyberbullying, and even threatening someone. You don't just have to be the person that causes it, even standing by and not doing anything about it is still being apart of it. Sometimes causing youth violence can cause people to harm themselves or even in a worst case commit suicide.

Here is a quote from Maya Angelou "My wish for you is that you continue, continue to be who you are, to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness." I will say that I have been the cause of youth violence and being a bystander of youth violence. I was in 7th grade and me and this kid did not like each other. Every day in 5th period we would yell at each other and make fun of each other all the time. One of us would start saying something and then we would keep going on and on. We would tell each other we want to fight and all I wanted to do is smack and pound his face in. When covid 19 hit, we had no way to talk to each other, which I thought was a good thing so we don't get in trouble from our teachers for yelling across the room. This year we have not talked or done anything that would make us mad or upset. I wish that that would have never happened because it made a point in my life that made me upset and mad.

There was a time in my life when I was being the by standard of youth violence. There was this kid and his name was Joe. He was a very good friend and was very helpful. Mondays and Thursdays he would come over to hangout. We would help each other out on our homework assignments so we could get good grades. One day I noticed that he seemed sad and did not want to come over to my house. I would call him and he would decline the calls. At school one day I seen him so I ran up to him to see what was wrong. He told me that someone had been beating him up when he got off the bus. He said that the guy would hurt me even more if I told anyone. So I said I'll get on the bus with you and see what he does. At first I thought the guy was little and I could talk to him not being scared, No, He was a big dude that looked to be around 12 and we were 8 years old at the time. So I got to scared to confront him so I just let him beat my friend Joe up every day after school. One day I felt really bad for him so I told the school principal and he told the kid that he need to say sorry and he is suspended for 4 days. Then I said sorry to Joe because I did not do anything about because I was scared. He said thank you for telling because I never would have.

A Lot of kids have issues with youth violence, even me. But I think that we all need to learn that it can affect us real badly and that we need to be more aware of it. I would hate to hear that someone got bullied and took their life away. That is why youth violence is a real thing in today's world. It affects our society by it being all around us and even online. Its like if you get bullied you want someone else to feel what you went through. If we stop youth violence now we would not have so much later in life. In Conclusion, I think that youth violence is a bad thing in our today's society and that we need to make everyone aware of it and how it is affecting us.

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



Youth violence needs to stop! I don't care if you think it is cool because it not it is hurtful and Mean. If thair is something going on at home talk to an adult don't take it out on other people do what is right not what is wrong

I have been the bully and I have been bullied. when I was in 4th grade I was doing some stuff I should have not have done so I was having a hard time So I went around looking for the littlest kid that was Harding having the hardest time and I went and picked on him I would just do it over and over and over and over so finally we decided that I needed to get help so I got help and I was able to overcome what was going on.

Another time in 4th grade I got bullied by a kid I was at the basketball court at her school and I was shooting a basketball into the tallest hoop and this kid came and decided he was going to interrupt what I was doing so we grabbed a ball and started throwing it at the hoop and knocking my ball out of the air so I told him to go away and you want so I went to a different hoop and started playing there until we went away then I went back and he came back and did the exact same thing he did it again for two more times then finally I got mad enough that I told him to go away and he threw a basketball at my face so I did what I thought was right and I ended the fight.

Bullying is not nice, bullying is hurtful what I would do to help stop it is if I saw someone bullying someone I would go up and try to break it up and tell the bully to go away if you weren't going to way I would simply stand there and chili dead and if he threw a punch I would run have the kid that was getting bullied run with me go to a teacher and tell them.

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



## Never Give Up

I  
remember...  
in 6th grade  
I was playing kickball  
with my friends  
I remember...  
that I kicked a home run!  
And the kids...  
(...my friends)  
To my surprise  
threatened me  
that I should never come back to school.  
And that's when they started kicking me  
And harassing me with the amplitude of an angry mob.  
The grey stench of sweat covered me.  
I could taste the spitting venom coming from their mouths.  
My stomach started to toss and turn and I thought that I wasn't good enough.  
My eyes started to water  
My vision was a blur  
my stomach was like an exploding firework...  
My hands started to shake like a tumbling rock ready to crack.  
The next couple of days was like playing battleship but I had no turns.  
I took hit after hit after hit until I couldn't take it anymore.  
I did not want to go to school.  
Maya Angelou once said...  
"You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated."  
Never let the bullies win, never let them take over you.  
Never give up, you are worth it.

Youth violence is when youth fight each other and hurt each other. Youth violence happens to everyone it can be from punching, kicking, biting to saying rude words to bullying online all of these are youth violence. Youth violence is sad, it happens to friends, it happens to enemy's and it happens to family. Youth violence is caused by the adults they love that are on drugs or are abusive.

Drugs can mess people up, they are full of nicotine and they can make you mad and sad and the kid who is abusive feels like they don't care about them. And they retaliate against it and take all of their pain and sadness with words who they are hurting. Abusive parents cause youth violence because they hurt their kid. And the kid doesn't know how to deal with being mad because their parents don't know how to control their emotion so they don't know any better.

Their parents are setting a bad example for the kid so it makes them mean. I want to help everyone I can, I want to help old and Young. I can show people I care and help them if they need help. And if you see them sad you can help them and make them feel better. I can help when I see youth violence I can go over there and tell them to stop or I can tell an adult. Or I can call the police. And how to make your efforts long lasting is make the person you are trying to help know that you really care and you are just trying to help.

**James Cole Noorda – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Summit Academy Draper Campus - Teacher, Kim Arminen**



Youth Violence

Youth violence is a big problem in today's age. Youth violence can be caused by parents fighting, causing them needing to lash out in anger, it can be caused by a child's parents being addicted to drugs or alcohol, and it can also be caused by many more things. Youth violence has affected me in one way because my friend in the sixth grade had committed suicide. Other than that, I haven't been affected by it. My Mom has been affected by it a lot more though so more examples will come from her stories.

My mom had to deal with some youth violence as a kid, but she also is still dealing with it as an adult with some of her older friends who are causing the youth violence. As a kid, my mom's parents went through a nasty divorce. Her mom would throw things on the floor, causing them to break when she was in a fight with her husband. It was a very loud household and my mom ran away a couple times to get out of that place. Once they finalized the divorce, things started to eventually get better.

A more recent thing going on is with 2 of my moms friends is that they are using drugs and drinking lots of alcohol. One of the parents older kids walked in on the mom doing drugs. For a couple years before this, she had been saying she had stopped drugs and was recovering, but that turned out to be a lie. I am pretty sure she is still doing the drugs but we haven't talked to her in a couple years because she was refusing help from her friends. The second friend my mom has she has known since she was in elementary school. She drinks a lot around her kids. She is divorced and fought really hard to get her kids back, but she is still drinking.

Some ways we can help prevent youth violence is if we find out that the problem is happening, contact professionals to visit the household. You can also try to get support for the parents and kids. Youth violence is a huge problem in today's age and needs to stop as soon as possible.

**Caleb Eyre – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Butler Middle School – Teacher, Katherine Cance**



Prompts

How has youth violence affected my life?

Where am I confronted by youth violence?

What are the causes of youth violence?

What can I do about youth violence?

Internalized Homophobia

My first experience with youth violence was at the beginning of the fourth grade when one of my friends was being bullied for being “gay”. I didn’t even know what gay meant at the time, and I’m sure that the rest of my grade didn’t either, they just knew it was “bad”. He was tormented relentlessly and some of my now ex-friends would talk about him behind his back and it made me feel awful having to sit there and watch this all happen. I didn’t know what to do, I was figuratively speaking, frozen. This was my first experience with homophobia.

I soon went on later that year to have the overbearing realization that I was gay, or I guess at that time I thought I was bisexual. Along with my older sister passing earlier that year, growing up in a very conservative town in central Utah, and being gay made me hate myself and made me feel like I was a worthless, depressed sinner. There were some nights, long nights where I just sat there wanting to die. This is when I started to hang out with my friends more, to distract and escape myself. This in a way, “healed” me from the darkest point in my life.

In the summer between the fourth and fifth grade, I moved from Nephi, Utah to Cottonwood Heights, Utah. I still would visit my friends from Nephi however. At one of these visits was one of the worst experiences I have ever had. My friend, well ex-friend said to me, “I don’t know why anyone would ever be friends with a gay person,”. This made me feel awful, and that the friend who I had once knew was gone, and was tainted by hatred and homophobia. I again froze, I didn’t tell him how much he hurt me, I just brushed it off. I haven’t seen or spoken to him since.

The following year is when I experienced my last major experience with homophobia, although I have dealt with many minor forms of it. In the sixth grade I had become friends with this person whom I had thought to be my friend. I had come out to him he accepted me, however the following week he got mad at me and he called me a “faggot”. This if you do not know, is one of the worst slurs to call someone in the LGBTQ+ community.

Relating to my case of youth violence, it is caused by pressure from friends, their parents and religion. I have noticed that one person in a friend group might say something like, “That’s so gay” and then soon the entire group is saying that. And when it comes to parents, I am under the belief that someone isn’t born homophobic, they have to be taught and most of the time children take their beliefs from their parents. Though this is controversial I do believe that religion can be the cause of someone’s

bigotry. For example, in Christianity (I only say Christianity because it's the only one I've ever been in even though I'm not religious now) since 1946 in a translation of the Bible, it has said that homosexuality is a sin even though the original text said "arsenokoitai" which means "men who took active roles in non-procreative sex".

To combat youth violence, I tell people off when they do something that is offensive or bigoted. Educating them might prevent them from doing this in the future. We as a society can also stop teaching and passing on prejudices to children. This in turn, will eliminate homophobia, racism etc. in the future. Both these will help us better ourselves as people and help end bigotry.

Zoey Grange – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Maria Georgiou



### **My Thunderstorm**

An average life has many storms  
The sun then shines, and it outforms.  
Sadly, the sun does not always shine  
Many have a life that is filled with cries

Their thunder is twenty four-seven  
They are in hell, but they wish to be in heaven  
They wish to escape the pain  
You may know someone like this  
You might even be thinking of their name

Together we can heal each other  
We can stop them from their suffer  
But in order to do this,  
We have to outshine the darkness.

As a kid I was always deathly afraid of thunderstorms. Maybe it's because of how many people die each year because of them. Or maybe, just maybe it's because they are loud & scary & make me cry. Just like my father when he's drunk; he was the thunderstorm. It wasn't always a problem, but when it was, it was bone-chilling.

Being the youngest child, I was always oblivious to everything that was happening. For example, whenever one of my brothers told a "Grown-Up" Joke, I wouldn't understand it. I also didn't understand why a storm would shake up our house so often. William Shiel jr. defines youth violence as, "Violence involving young persons, typically children, adolescents, and young adults between the ages of 10 and 24. The young person can be the victim, the perpetrator, or both. Youth violence includes aggressive behaviors such as verbal abuse, bullying, hitting, slapping, or fistfighting".

Our family time would always exclude my father. Now it wasn't like we didn't want him to join us, it was more like he yelled at us if we tried to invite him. As I grew older, I didn't understand why he would start yelling at everyone, including me. The thunderstorm got so bad that after it struck, I would hide under my covers & cry myself to sleep. He made me question myself all the time. Was I being too sensitive, or maybe I was making the thunderstorm up, & it wasn't really there.

see him. His thunderstorm hit me, and it hit me hard. Last year I was diagnosed with depression, anxiety, & bipolar disorder. I'm currently on medicine for all of the above. If you're asking me, I would say that I hate my father. I know 'hate' is a strong word, but it's true. I blame him for my trust issues & everything else that's wrong with our family. I wish he could've let his anger out another way, instead of making us cry.

Although I always perceived him as the bad guy, I know that wasn't the truth. My thunderstorm may have been terrible, but his was worse. In the study done by Nicholas M Morelli "Intergenerational Transmission of Abusive Parenting", he explains, "Parents who were abused as children are at increased risk for perpetuating maladaptive parenting practices". In my fathers case, this is exactly what happened. When he grew up, his mother was a thunderstorm. A thunderstorm so terrible, that he never learned how to love properly. His pain stuck to him, so he gave it to us. He had his thunderstorm disappear, at the expense of passing it on to someone else.

Even though it didn't take place at school, I remember longing for a friend that could distract me from my home life. That's one way we can help kids who are dealing with youth violence. They need people who will stand by them, no matter what happens. I share my story, maybe more than I should. I do this because I want kids, who are scared to come out, to feel comfortable with themselves & their past. There's nothing I want more than kids to know that what is happening at home is not their fault. The only thing that we can control, is ourselves. Take it from the girl, who grew up too fast.

**Kendra Jones – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Summit Academy Draper Campus – Teacher, Kim Arminen**



DO THE 'WRITE' THING ESSAY

I remember being young, and oblivious. Back when you never had to worry about problems in the world, because you weren't even aware of them. But eventually you do see them. The question is do you ever try to fix them? Youth violence is definitely a big problem that people are aware of, yet it seems to be getting worse. When I was three or four, my older cousin and I were very close. But she was abused a lot. Nobody was there to stop it, so it just kept getting worse until she couldn't take anymore. She moved down to St. George, and wouldn't really talk to anyone in our family. She didn't understand why not even her mother was able to protect her from violence. I have another cousin with twin daughters. They are both such cute girls that I love to death, but they aren't being raised in a great environment. Even though they are only four, they are exposed to violence and abuse. It is not uncommon to hear them swear at people because their parents swear at them. Sometimes, although rare, they will hit themselves because they are told they are such horrible children, and they believe it. One of them once freaked out when she saw duct tape, and I asked her why. She said it was because she didn't want to have her mouth taped, or worse be taped in a box by her babysitter again. When I heard her say that, it broke my heart. Fortunately they are living with their grandma so that they can hopefully have a better upbringing.

For them, the cause was an abusive home life. But there are many different causes of youth violence. Things like depression, self-hate, neglect, divorce, jealousy, drug use, bullying, and cyber bullying. But I think the two biggest are bad family situations, and abuse at school.

Sometimes the two are related. If you deal with violence and abuse at home, it's very likely you would display some of that violence at school. And when you start being violent towards a person, they may also start having violent behavior. It's a chain reaction that has been going on for years now. But with every victim, the chain grows longer and longer. The more we put it off, the harder it will be to stop it. As a society we have messed up. But none of us want to take responsibility for it. Some of us seem to have labeled violence as 'normal' or 'part of life', and think there's nothing we can do about it. It's not right. There are things we can do to help. If you know somebody who lives with violence in their home or has to deal with it at school or experiences it in any way, one of the best things you can do for them is be a friend to them. Help them feel safe, happy, and cared about. They definitely need that in their lives. Remind them that they aren't alone, and you will be there for them when they need you. Maybe you can have them carpool with you and stay at your house for a bit to get away from a bad environment. Or have them walk with you in the halls and sit by you at lunch so they are never alone and feel more secure. But of course the most obvious thing you should do is tell someone about the violence. Maybe one of the people you tell has the power to help in ways you can't. But one sure way to make it worse is to do nothing. Standing on the sidelines and watching isn't doing anyone any good. Can you imagine how much better off the world would be if we all tried to help instead of hurting each other? Well this is the first step. You can do the right thing. Stop ignoring it and take action when you see violence.

Kyle Keck – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace



Youth Violence

In today's world, youth violence is a major problem. Youth violence is as stated in the youtube video "What is Youth Violence" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as "when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others" it also states, "Bullying, fighting, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence are all forms of youth violence" I have personally been a cause of youth violence to others in the past and I deeply regret it. I used to judge others of their appearance or personality without truly getting to know them. Much of this changed when my mom shared a story with me while we were waiting in the car. The story was a facebook post from one of my mom's old friends, she was talking about her 6-year old son who was having trouble with bullying at his school. This kid was being made fun of because he was being called names because other children thought he was fat. Attached to the post was a video of her kid, in tears, wishing that he wasn't fat and saying that he hated himself. This story shook my soul, I realized that I had probably been a cause of trouble like this in somebody else's household.

I really like this story because it clearly emphasizes the consequences of youth violence, in this case bullying. We can see that the children at the bullied kids school clearly affected many people's lives. If we look closer these kids imagined they were only bullying one kid, however later we see that his mom is clearly sad that her child was bullied. This shows that bullying can affect families. If we look even closer we can see that their bullying has even affected me, a total stranger to them. Just imagine how many other people were affected by this story as I was. This shows that bullying can affect communities.

Bullying is one of the less severe cases of youth violence. If this less severe case can affect this many lives just imagine what the more severe cases can do. Some of the more severe cases of youth violence include fighting, threats with weapons, gang-related violence, and even homicide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also state in their video that "Youth violence happens every day. 24 hours, about 15 youth are victims of homicide". As seen from the quote youth violence can be a disastrous thing. If you are a parent, imagine coming home from work and finding your killed by his peers out of malice. This would result in tears and heartbreak for most parents. You adults need to teach kids the severity of youth violence, if the proper precautions are not taken to end such catastrophes we will never be able to stop the spread of such hateful actions. Most of the time a child will not be killed through youth violence, at least in most places, but in Los Angeles, California, and more of the more large urban areas, this is a much more abundant problem. The U.S. Department of Justice of Los Angeles states "Innocent people in these communities face daily exposure to violence from criminal gangs trafficking in drugs and weapons and gangs fighting among themselves to control or extend their turf and their various criminal enterprises". Many people in this area will have a constant fear of getting caught by one of these gangs. Children walking on the street could easily be targeted by a gang and forced into drugs, or violence which can result in abuse or death. In my neighborhood I do not face any of these troubles others may be facing, but I know that youth violence is still a problem in many other places, including my neighborhood.

Youth violence may seem like an inescapable punishment to some but there are some things we can do to stop the spread of it. A couple of ideas are to promote awareness into the lives of children,

provide quality education to children, strengthen problem solving skills, hook up kids with caring adults, provide protected communities for kids to learn and grow and to intervene to violence we see it done to any kid. If we can integrate these six steps into our daily lives we can lower most cases of youth violence in today's world. I personally believe that by sharing stories with children that show the consequences of youth violence to kids at an early age we can promote healthier lives to our children. By lowering youth violence we can help kids speak out more and not be afraid of their peer's teasing. We can provide kids the necessary skills to stop bullying and we can help children to say no to drugs. If youth can learn these skills and receive these attributes we can completely change society as we know it and grow up in a more suitable environment for fun and love.

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**Maddie Kenner – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Hurricane Intermediate School – Teacher, Susan Wiese**



**You Matter**

We got the email, me and my friends jump up and ran to the teacher show him the email then he sends us next door to the other fifth grade teacher where we showed her the email and she goes to the sender, who was sitting in the corner of our previous classroom with a chrome book lying half open on the floor next to her. She was doodling away on a piece of paper one of several she has scribbled furiously on in the past two minutes the teacher sends her to the counselor's office and sends us to the cafeteria where we would write the sender letters and notes on why and how she was wrong to ever think or write the email that scared the living daylight out of her own friends. My letter read:

You are amazing and we all love you more than you know. We need you even those who you think never notice you want your peppy and encouraging attitude and for this to come up is shocking when you are so amazing and you should know that no matter what others say. You are extraordinary and worth more than the world to all of us.

We waited for the moment we could go in and see her, we waited for hours until we were sent back to our classroom where we were supposed to be learning about pangea. We walk in to the classroom and heads turn to greet us, the friends who didn't receive the email were asking "Is she really going to commit suicide."

I didn't know what to say my heart was pumping, what should I say, the truth or just make something up but I couldn't lie to my own friends who hadn't received the email. "Yes" I say through gritted teeth. I will never forget the look on their faces, terrified, disapproving glances shot at us like we were horrible friends but this had had nothing to do with us.

When the teacher finally said she was ready to see us we ran through the halls straight past the principal's office, straight past the secretary, straight past the counselor into the office. When we saw her, we could see the tear stains on her cheeks where she had been crying after reading our letters and notes. We all hugged her and burst into tears. Shouts of "Don't do it" and "We need you" echoed around the room. When the counselor entered the room we were all sitting in a circle around our friend telling her everything that made her incredible.

We sat in the counselor's office for ever even after school ended. The counselor had a great idea that we could have a sleepover. Even though I wasn't able to go I know that the letter I wrote did something to help her.

The cause of my friend giving out that email was her thinking she was worthless to the world because she was being made fun of. I think that this is the cause for youth violence. Most kids get put down easily and it can make it hard to get back up.

Youth violence can occur in almost every situation and there are many different places for youth violence at home, online, at school.

Youth violence is very common especially at school, bullying will go away. We just need to stop letting people get put down by it. This is how we can slow the spread of terrible thoughts and feelings in youth.

What can I/we do to stop this, is just shout out to someone, give someone a little pep in their step. Youth violence is something that won't go away in a second but it will go away if we all jump in and show that we care about the kids who go through this every day. We can stand up to bullying, stand up to youth violence stand up for someone, stand up for the world's survival because everyone plays a part in the world and youth violence doesn't help people play their part.

We All Matter

Simeon Kumar - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
North Layton Junior High - Teacher, Melinda Stecklein



Do the Write Thing

By Simeon Kumar

Youth violence is a serious thing,  
We'd like to deny it, all the bad things that it brings,  
But it is still there leaching on us'  
In there, damaging the truss,

Inside our heads,  
Its like our emotional health has gone to bed.  
It is a serious subject,  
If left unchecked.  
It can result in depression, or even death,  
Suicidal attempts that will take your last breath.

Causes of it include peer pressure or stress,  
Poor parents or any type of drug in excess.  
Any form of violence is on the list,  
And all these things that are never wished.

Youth violence can be avoided  
Speak up against it using all of your voices.  
Walk around proud, confident, and tall,  
Protecting those who are bullied at all

They will sometimes think that they can't avoid it,  
That it is their fault that they suffer, their fault that life "sucks,"  
Convince them they can, indeed, control it.  
Convince them that they have the power, everything that they need,  
To get them confidence and to get them freed.

We all deserve happiness, you, and me.  
So help everyone get it and you will see,  
That we all need it and so this is my plea.  
Even the bullies and mean parents—  
Need to be free.

It's a part of our rights, but sadly still,  
Not all of us get it because of free will,  
People abuse their power and take away the joy  
So help get it back.

We all want to be happy  
So help others get it, got it, savvy?  
Be a friend to those close or near,  
Those in your class, every peer.  
Help them year after year.

Teach them that life is good.  
Get them out of a bad place.  
Help them out when they need it,  
And help them erase

Memories of bad things  
And cut off bad strings.

So here is the conclusion of everything that we learnt,  
Even you bullies out there, whether past or current.  
We all have the ability to fight off child abuse,  
And we should all do it and then we all can cruise,  
Through this life just a little bit kinder, and happier to.

Life can be such a joyous trip,  
If we could all take a tip.  
Help those around you, no matter their style,  
Their body shape, color, or whether they smile.

They all deserve kindness and to be happier still,  
So make them feel special and fill them with trill.  
Child abuse will always be there,  
So fight against it and make people aware.

Child abuse is a serious thing and we should all do our part to help fight against it whether we know those who are getting abused or not, we can all do our part to fight against child abuse.

**Katie Lin – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Syracuse Arts Academy Junior High – Teacher, Heidi Stone**



### The Vicious Cycle of Violence

There is something universal that has plagued humanity since the beginning. That is violence, it may not be a disease, but it can be as fatal as any. Youth violence is especially dangerous since it affects the future generation of workers and leaders. We must understand youth violence and how dangerous it can be. There are three main sections to youth violence, the violence in the lives of the victim, the causes of youth violence, and how to stop youth violence.

Firstly, most of youth violence can be summed up into bullying. Also, bullying does not always mean physical violence. Bullying, or youth violence, can cause numerous mental and physical problems to the victim. I know some of the mental issues that can occur since I have been a victim of bullying. The bullying had gotten so bad to the point that I have gone mute and self harmed. But I have been really lucky that the bullying has stopped, and none of it was not physical, so I do not have any physical problems like head injuries or broken bones. Though, what I do lack in physical problems, I make up in mental problems. The bullying has left me with a voice ingrained into my head that is laughing at my every mistake, ridiculing me for every imperfection I have, and telling me that I am not worth anything. This voice has led me to self harm and into questioning whether I should cease to exist. Although I do not struggle with self harm anymore, there are so many others that are struggling with it and going through much more brutal violence.

Next, we need to find the causes of youth violence since we should see both sides of the violence. Youth violence can be caused by many things, many of which could be the child's homelife. It could also be triggered by jealousy. Or it can be caused by the need for the person to

protect their self confidence. I once had a friend that spread rumors about me, and all of the reasons from before were all factors to her deciding to spread rumors. Her homelife was not the greatest as her parents were getting a divorce. When she later apologized, she told me how jealous she was of how I was such a “perfect” kid. She also told me how it felt like her confidence was crushed whenever I was around. She said that spreading rumors felt like the easiest way to deal with it. The majority of people want the easy way to deal with unwanted emotions, violence is just one of the easiest.

Lastly, we need ways to combat youth violence. Now, with the invention of the internet and phones, there are many ways someone can report an act of youth violence anonymously. There are apps, like the SafeUT app, that can allow students to report any acts of youth violence to the school from their phones. There is always the good old fashion way of telling a trusted adult about any violence, but this is always easier said than done. Getting help to the victim is very important since they could have gained many mental problems that can cause them to take their own life, but one must not forget that the person in charge of the violence will also need help finding a better solution than violence. There is also something that can help prevent youth violence from the beginning, and that is being kind. Kindness is something so simple, but something that is lacking in many places around the world.

To recap, there is how youth violence impacts people's lives, the causes of youth violence, and how we can help stop it. Many people will have to face youth violence, which can alter their behavior. We must understand the causes of youth violence to better understand the problem. We can all help with stopping youth violence by being there for one another. Violence feeds off of unwanted feelings but a little bit of kindness can go a surprisingly long way.

Isabelle McCullough – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace



Do the Right Thing

When we think of violence, we naturally think about violence being person to person, like bullying or abuse. Of all the epidemics in the world, one of the largest of them all is self-directed violence. Self-directed violence, simply means an activity, statement, or emotion directed against oneself. This violence can take place in many shapes, such as self harm and suicide. According to the Utah Health Department, the death rate for teen driving ages 15-17 in Utah, has decreased by 62% since 1999. The death rates for suicide ages 10-17 in Utah, has increased by 46.5% since 1999. That is 175% higher than the death rate for teen driving. Suicide happens all over the world, and it is the cause of deaths close to 800,000 humans every year. That is a single life every 40 seconds. In Utah, 621 people die from suicide each year, of that 621 people, 260 victims are teenagers.

Self harm is also a big part of self directed violence. This refers to purposefully hurting oneself. This may include burning, cutting, breaking bones, pulling out hair, and self-bruising. About 1 in 100 people self harm themselves. Mental self harm is another approach of self harm, that will mentally hurt oneself. Personally, I have mentally harmed myself by saying simple things like; “I am the worst” or “I am so stupid.” People around me have often used words like these against themselves. This negatively affects the people around us and sometimes leads us to taking part in bigger self harm activities. Self-directed violence is everywhere around us. So how do we help? How can we prevent this? First, we need to know the causes of why people are choosing to do this to themselves. Research from the Boston Children's Hospital shows that 90% of suicide deaths are from people that had suffered from a mental health disorder. The leading disorder being depression. In the past year, 16.6% of Utah adolescents, have reported having a major depressive episode or a feeling of hopelessness in the past year of 2020. More causes of this epidemic include the lack of social support or social isolation. Social isolation in teens leads to depression, anxiety, chronic loneliness, or other prevalent mental health disorders. Newport Academy, a therapy program for adolescents, shows that isolation affects sleeping, increases stress, increases incidence of alcohol and drug use as self-medication, highers the levels of mental health disorders, declines self-care, forms a sense of hopelessness, and increases the risk of suicide and self-directed violence. So how do we slow and stop the numbers of suicide and self-directed violence?

As humans we need a personal feeling of value. One of the reasons that people choose to stay here is because they feel needed on this earth. President Lyndon B. Johnson helped slow poverty and hunger in America. He said to give the poor “a hand up, not a handout.” What he said is very similar to the saying “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This means that it is better to teach people how to do something, rather than to just do it for them. We need to give people a hand up, and show them how they are needed. Most of us have experienced the difference between being handed something and to earning something with work and perseverance. Earning is always better for us. As individuals, we need to know how we have value.

I have recently thought about what we can do to slow the numbers of suicide and put them to a stop. There could be a program, called Hand to Hand, a union, that strives to save lives through showing individuals that they are needed here, so they can take that to find the value inside themselves. This program would not be a class, it would be a meeting where teens can share their thoughts, and learn

how to find their own self value, and then figuring out how to take action. Teaching younger people how to find value in themselves will affect the people all around us, and the future generations of our world. There are two very important approaches to finding our own self-value. First of all, to control our thoughts. We all are ourselves greatest friend and worst enemy. Many times, when we fail, our thoughts go to "I am stupid" or "I am a idiot". These will hurt us, so we need to change these thoughts into positive thoughts. It is so important to embrace those mistakes, and learn from them. A positive thought would be, "How can I fix that?" or "What can I do better next time?" Changing our thoughts will change everything, and will increase our feeling of self-worth. Next, is making goals. These goals need to start off really small. Once a goal is completed, it will feel good to be able to work for something, and then achieve it. Making goals will raise our feeling of value and self-esteem. There are also many other ways to raise our feeling of being needed. Teaching youth to love themselves, will make our future generations get better and better. When our future generations get better, our world will have more charity, become more hopeful, and more loving.

Suicide, self harm, and self-directed violence is an immense problem that is growing every day. It affects millions of lives in our small homes, communities, and nations around the world. Suicide, self harm, and self-directed violence is caused by many things, but the two main causes is social isolation and mental health disorders. Hand to Hand, may be a program that helps adolescents find self value in themselves. This program will make the world aware of this epidemic. Finding personal value will slow and steady the numbers of suicide, and make our world stronger.

Resources:

World Health Organization -

<https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/>

Violence and Injury Prevention Program -

<http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/teens/teen-driving/>

The Salt Lake Tribune -

<https://www.sltrib.com/news/2018/06/07/suicide-rates-rise-sharply-in-utah-and-across-the-country-new-report-shows/>

World Health Organian -

<https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/suicide-data>

MentalHealth.gov -

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for/mood-disorders/self-harm>

Boston Children's Hospital -

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/conditions-and-treatments/condition/s/suicide-and-teens/symptoms-and-causes>

The Heritage Foundation -

<https://www.heritage.org/marriage-and-family/commentary/the-war-pretty-50-years-failure>

Health Affairs -

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20200622.253235/full#:~:text=Factors%20that%20prevent%20people%20from,increase%20social%20isolation%20and%20loneliness>

Newport Academy -

<https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/effects-of-social>

-isolation-on-mental-health/

WebMD -

<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/recognizing-suicidal-behavior#1>

Verily -

<https://verilymag.com/2015/09/defining-self-worth-self-awareness-past-mistakes-acceptance>

Herlinda Nava – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Anne Salisbury



## *Youth Violence!*

### Discrimination

Definition of PEACE: A state or period in which there is no war, or a war has ended.  
Freedom.

Definition of PRIVILEGE: A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available  
only to a particular person or group.

Starting a war screaming “no justice, no peace!”

But things have not changed.

Fighting or not fighting we are all equal

But still they just do not understand what that means.

We fight for peace and equality!

But there is still evil

Innocent lives gone.

Why bring guns to a peaceful fight for civil rights?

Not only did you hurt those people but also their

**Family and friends, they will never forget**

Neither will **I or anyone else.**

We should not desensitize what is really going on.

People will sugar coat things

But why?

**It will be known!**

Why hate people for the color of their skin?

Why judge people for who they are?

They might not admit it, but they are jealous.

We do not mean any harm and we do not seek revenge.

They are scared because they think we will choose violence like they have in the past, but they are wrong.

If we must fight in that way for our rights, **we will.**

**BECAUSE NO ONE LISTENS!**

They are scared because they know we are strong.

They fear the power we were taught by our ancestors

They fear our strength because we have had to put up with injustice for far too long.

People are not born racist they are taught it.

Racism is passed on from generation to generation.

“if you only have love for your own race

Then you only leave space to discriminate

And to discriminate only generates hate” (Black Eyed Peas)

The only way to stop this hate is to teach the future generations love and acceptance.

**We will be seen.**

They say land of the free!

How is this the land of the free?

How is this land free if we still have to shed blood and tears for our rights to live freely?

Killing innocent people every day because of the color of their skin.

Killing people for fighting for their rights, is not the land of the free.

Killing people because of their differences

REALLY!?

When you see us do you only choose to see our differences

When you see us do you only choose to see the color of our skin

When you see us do you see us as humans?

When you see us do you see us as equals?

**Imagine**

Imagine living in peace

Imagine loving one another  
Imagine not being discriminated because of our skin  
Imagine not being discriminated because of our religions or beliefs  
Imagine being free  
Imagine being equal  
Imagine living in a world of peace  
Can't we just love one another?  
WE ARE ALL HUMAN  
We eat, sleep, and bleed the same.

## **Feel**

THE

PAIN

FEAR

ANXIETY

These are things us colored people feel when we hear the word discrimination racism and inequality.

## **WE ARE FED UP!**

## **WE ARE TIRED!**

Some people in this world have never been followed in a store because the color of their skin.

Some people have never been told to go back to their country because they do not look like the typical "American".

Some people have never been pulled over because their skin color looks suspicious.

Some people do not know how any of this feels and that is what I call PRIVILEGE.

Your so called "colored friend" does not validate your wokeness nor erases your racism.

They say "All men are created equal"

Then why do we not treat each other as equals?

People need to grow up and see the real problem here.

I am a Mexican American.

**I AM PROUD!**

I am a daughter of an immigrant that came to America to give me and my siblings a better life.

We are the youth, and we will stop the racism and injustice the past generations have brought upon the world.

We will be the change.

**"I CANT BREATHE"**

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***Songs that inspired me***

Black eyed peas-Where is the love?

H.E.R-I can't breathe

Arlissa-We won't move

Imagine- John Lennon

Stand up- Cynthia Erivo

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Isaac Navarro – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Anne Salisbury



Youth violence is a terrible thing I've experienced it. Kids cannot tell their parents something like this is - happening because then you get more hate it's a cycle most the time It doesn't work for me and all my friends this applies. Kids will make fun of you call you names hurt you. I know these things cause its happened to me.

I'll tell you what happened to me well I never new my biological dad. And I never do he cheated on my mom so for that I don't want to meet him. But then my mom met another guy his name I don't want to say, I never want to see him again. He hurt me he locked me in a room with me and he hit me and threw me I was yelling for help, but nobody came some time passed and my arms were killing me I got out and told my grandparents. They kicked him out and that was the last time I saw him. But for school I wore many long sleeves for a while because I was scared what they were gonna say. People knew I had no dad so if I ever got into an argument they could say "at least I have a dad." It was always that over and over I know kids go thru this stuff and its not right but they can't say anything about it or it will get worse kids will hurt them out of anger.

I want to help these kids so maybe there could be some ways to help these kids. Maybe more teachers could be outside to look at the kids. And if they are able to catch the kid don't say a the kid that he was bullying told them cause if you do you'll get hurt get called names you see there is a cycle. There are many ways to help. Just make sure you help us not get hurt. Its kinda dumb to say but there are kids like me that have really thick skin because of call of dudy lobbies people in there would get mad talk so much bad stuff even read out your address and scare you. I grew up there so I have thick skin but kids like me shouldn't need thick skin. Parents are always saying why we spend all day playing games its to escape reality. One of my favorite quotes "wake up to reality nothing ever goes as planned in this accursed world the longer you live the more you will realize that the only things that truly exist in this reality are merely pain suffering and futility listen everywhere you look in this world where ever there is light there will always be shadows to be found as well as long as there is a concept of victors the vanquished will also exist the shellfish intent of wanting to preserve peace initiates wars and hatred is born in order to protect love there are nexuses casual relationships that cannot be separated." - madara Uchiha

Well now ive talked about a lot now ill talk in order like some ways to help. Maybe have a teacher at places where kids go. Also for school in general its hard I had super smart friends they had all A's but now its like we are completely different kids. My friends have all lost interest in grades. I usually ask them why most of they concluded its to escape the reality we are in. where waking up to 7 assignments daily plus what we do everyday and zoom also our parents expectations. Take me for example my parents are strict. I have stayed up till 3 in the morning doing assignments just so I don't get yelled at or punished. I know times are tough but we are also overworked.

It seems like the ways adults deal with bullying is by saying stop and please like why. That'll never work. If you tell a teacher everyone will think you're a "snitch" so people will hurt you hit you. But we cant do anything about it because its telling adults that got them there. Kids deal with so much these days even cyberbullying is a thing. But to be honest I don't know what to even say about cyberbullying. Kids can

come home and be all bruised and beat up. So many kids act all tough. They even say they are bloods and crips. In middle school its like a gang war.

But out of my life and friends so far and other peoples experience the bullying never stopped. Not for me my best friend either. Its insane to think people really hurt their kids like me. Or how bullys find enjoyment hurting other people. World peace will never be a thing as long as little conflict can exist. If money disappears and a new thing is nice and cool. It will replace its value and it will become treasured among people and then people will rob it. And then more conflict has begun.

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



Worldwide, some 200,000 homicides occur among youth 10–29 years of age each year, which is 42% of the total number of homicides globally each year. Homicide is the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 10-29 years, and 84% of these homicides involve male victims. Youth violence is a rising issue in our generation and has been for many years. When our parents were kids, bullying was only calling each other names, stealing each other's lunch money, and the occasional fist fight. Now, it's much more. Kids are purposely pushing others to suicide, which is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24. Several kids don't even have social media, or even phones, because their parents don't want them to be cyber bullied like many other kids their age are. Some people just don't understand that words can hurt, and eventually push people into depression or even suicide. Other than bullying, there are many other forms of youth violence, such as fighting, gang-related violence, threats with weapons, teen dating violence, abuse, and much more. Some kids are scared to even go out because of the amount of youth violence happening in this generation. This has affected my life negatively and many others' in the same way. Because of youth violence, I'm not allowed to go many places without an adult, because my parents don't want something bad to happen to me, and I know many other kids who have it the same. There are many causes of youth violence, such as media influence, communities and neighborhoods, insufficient parent supervision, peer pressure, drug and alcohol use, traumatic events, mental illness, and much more. More times than not, youth violence doesn't just happen for no reason, but rather, has a cause. But there are ways we can prevent this, like promoting family environments that support a healthy development, providing quality education early in life, strengthening youth's skills, connecting youth to caring adults and activities, creating protective community environments, intervening to lessen harms and prevent future risks, and much more.

Youth violence has affected my life negatively in many ways. My parents don't allow me to out without an adult very often, because they don't want anything bad to happen to me. There is so much youth violence in the world lately, that some people don't even feel safe going out all the time, and I'm one of those people. I've had a few scary experiences over the years that have made me not want to go places without my parents or someone I trust. Even with my parents, things have happened. Last year, my mom and I were at the store and we noticed the same man on every aisle we were on at the same time as us. So we went to the complete opposite end of the store, and there he was, at the same place as us at the same time, yet again. So my mom said something like "this creepy man needs to quit following us already", loud enough that he could hear her, and finally, he stopped following us. Another experience I had similar to this was earlier this year, in the summer, my mom and I were at the store, again, and I was about to get in the car after coming out, then these sketchy looking guys drove past slowly, blasting explicit rap out their rolled down windows. They looked a little drunk or high, and they gave my mom and I a creepy look, like they wanted to do something to us. The one in the passenger seat then proceeded to open his door, right next to my mom's car, and slowly started to get out. My mom quickly opened her car door and basically pushed me inside the car. She got in the car as well, and we immediately drove away. I've had so many experiences like this before, and even those two could've ended badly if my mom weren't there to protect me. I've also had domestic violence in my house in past years. Cdc.gov states that "youth violence increases the risk for behavioral and mental health

difficulties". And I have anxiety, partially because of youth violence. So youth violence has affected me in many negative ways.

There are many causes of youth violence. These include media influence, communities and neighborhoods, insufficient parent supervision, peer pressure, drug and alcohol use, traumatic events, and mental illness. Social media today causes so much, and youth violence is one of the many things it can cause. It can be harmful to teens and even kids or adults because of cyber bullying, photoshopped images, drama, peer influence, and much more. The damage it can cause can eventually lead to youth violence. Meta-analyses of the unhealthy effects of media-violence have shown that "youth who view media-violence on a regular basis are more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior, ranging from imitative violent behavior with toys to criminal violence, acceptance of violent behavior, increased feelings of hostility, and desensitization toward violent behavior". Poor communities and neighborhoods can also be damaging and lead to youth violence. If someone lives in a bad community or neighborhood, they can be influenced by the people around them or develop mental or behavioral issues, which can cause youth violence. Nbc states that "instability and family disruption is predictive of violence" and "adolescents who are exposed to violence in their neighborhood feel vulnerable and unable to control their lives". There are many more causes of youth violence, but these or only a few of them. So youth violence doesn't just happen for no reason, there is always a cause behind it.

There are many ways we can prevent youth violence from happening, like promoting family environments that support a healthy development, providing quality education early in life, strengthening youth's skills, connecting youth to caring adults and activities, creating protective community environments, and intervening to lessen harms and prevent future risks. If someone grows up in a good and healthy family environment, they're less likely to experience youth violence or be violent in their lifetime. Cdc.gov states that "promoting healthy environments that support family development" can help prevent youth violence. Another way youth violence can be prevented is by providing quality education early in life. If someone grows up being taught good things, like being kind and never being violent, they're a lot less likely to experience youth violence or be violent in their lifetime. If they don't learn that violence is wrong and they don't have the education they need, they are more likely to experience youth violence or be violent. Cdc.gov states that starting with "preschool enrichment with family engagement" can help prevent youth violence. Youth violence is a big problem in this generation that needs to be prevented. We can use these ways to help end youth violence.

To conclude, youth violence is a rising problem. It affects so many people's lives. A lot of people aren't allowed to go out without an adult and some even have mental and behavioral issues because of it. There are many causes behind youth violence. Bullying, media influence, and peer pressure are all causes. Many people are pressured by their friends or people online to be violent, which can end very badly. Bullying can also have an impact on people and eventually cause them to be violent towards others. But there are many ways we can prevent this, like strengthening youth's skills, connecting youth to caring adults and activities, creating protective community environments. If someone's skills are strengthened as a youth, they are less likely to be violent and they will continue to have those good

qualities and skills throughout their lifetime. They are also less likely to be violent if they live in a protective community environment, because they won't be exposed to violence and harmful things. We should use these ways to prevent youth violence. So if we help prevent youth violence and keep kids away from the many causes, youth violence won't affect our lives so much and eventually won't be a problem anymore.

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



How youth violence has affected my life is because one time I was in 3rd grade and there was this girl who wasn't so nice to me and she would bully me and call me mean names and take my friends away from me. One day I was out on the playground playing with my friends when this girl came by and said "Raeley why do you have friends and was like I am way cooler than her and this group of friends were just people I got to hang out with and off course they went with this other girl. So weeks and weeks after that she had actually started to abuse me a little she would trip me and still continue to take my friends away day after day. As much as I hated it I had to stand up for myself so one day I told her that she needed to stop or I would start to target her but then later she stopped and I was kind of being the mean one now I had finally learned what was going on with her, she had been having a hard time at home so she chose to attack me with her anger so when I was about to attack her I thought and told myself this isn't right and I stopped.

Some things that cause youth violence is kids that need extra help in things or kids that have hard times at home or at school. Or that have a family that is not together and they are always angry so that kid has to get his anger out on someone and sometimes that someone is you or your friends. Other things that cause youth violence is sometimes loss of family or other things like houses, money, food and other things we need if a child is missing this stuff they might be sad or angry with then they target you to let their feelings and anger out.

What I can do to stop youth violence is I can stick up for kids that are being bullied or abused. I can help them and become their friend and know that it is ok to trust me. I can stop bullying if I am the one that is bullying the person or abusing and I will not ever be rude to people with a different skin color or if they are gay I will be nice to everyone even people that are mean to me. I would hope that someday youth violence would be gone and that people could just learn to be nice and treat others with respect.

Dylan Rawe – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Spanish Fork Jr. High – Teacher, Chance Carter



Do the Write Thing

When Parents or Adults think of bullying, they may think of name calling, stealing lunches or a fist fight, but it's so much more than that. Bullying can happen anywhere it could happen at home, online, at school, or even with friends. But everyone talks about how we need to stop bullying, be a buddy, not a bully, but nobody does that. We all just stand there and watch it happen, or we even could be the bully. Bullying comes in all shapes and sizes sometimes people don't even notice that they are bullying it could just be an occasional comment or name that you throw at someone, it may only seem like it bruises on the outside but it could cut on the inside.

On a very solemn day, my older sister came home from school and immediately went up to her room. Later we found out that one of her close friends had committed suicide a few hours after school the day earlier. Her friend had left a note to her parents saying that she couldn't take anymore abuse from kids at school and that she couldn't handle anymore bullying. She had taken an overdose of ibuprofen and had gone into a coma. She then passed away a few days later. A few weeks ago my older brother came home and told my mom and dad that one of his old friends had committed suicide. He later commented that he had seen him recently at school and had seemed fine. In the following weeks something about my brother had seemed off he wasn't making as much jokes and not being as goofy to us at home, Suicide does not always just affect parents and family, It usually affects everyone that's hears about it or witnessed it. Something that we need to do is not focus on doing something big for one person but do little things for everyone, like a smile here or just saying hi to a random person. You never know if you could have just saved their life. After these unfortunate events my house has just had a tension in it like something might happen, and it's not the exciting tension like in a movie but more of a sad tension like you feel like something bad is going to happen. These were only 2 examples of bullying that led to suicide but according to WHO the World Health Organization "Close to 800, 000 people die due to suicide every year, which is one person every 40 seconds." So in just one typical class period up to 67 could have committed suicide throughout the world. I was bullied in the first grade by a kid, I hadn't known this at the time, but his parents were getting a divorce and abusing him. I was always looking for a way to get back at him, and when that time came I had the chance to bully him back. But something stopped me, maybe it was the look in his eyes of terror like I had reminded him of his dad, I stopped what I had been about to say and asked him instead if he wanted to play with me after school. He later told me what was going on at home and now we're good friends.

Causes for teen violence may differ from Bullying, abuse at home, sexual abuse, name calling, or jealousy. It doesn't matter what form bullying takes; it needs to be stopped. People need to stand up for others before it gets too far, to where the victim feels like they need to commit suicide to relieve themselves of their suffering. We need to be kinder to people and think before we speak. Most bullying isn't fist fights or stealing lunches, but it's verbal. When you call someone a name, it can wound them and not on the outside but on the inside. If repeated enough it will influence the victim to think of themselves that way.

If we were only kind to others we would save so many lives. The solution to preventing suicide, bullying, and all other youth violence is kindness. To expound upon what I mean, I mean that if we were each

kind to one new person each to say hi, smile, invite them to eat lunch with you, invite them to hang out, invite them into your friend group. If we were all to be kind to at least 1 person a day then we would save so many kids' lives. Today I was able to help brighten someone's day by sitting by them at lunch.

My challenge to you, the reader and anybody else that hears about this essay is to take matters into your own hands and do something kind for 1 person at least daily, and I know that if we do this we will make the world a better place. Thank you so much for reading this essay. I hope I was able to help brighten someone's day.

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



Clouded sunshine.

Imagine you're a teen on the internet, you like the most popular instagram post. Then you get a message saying that someone followed you, you get excited, you feel popular for just one second then it goes downhill. They tell you don't matter or you should just end it. Suicide isn't the answer, in Utah adults aged 25-64 had the highest rate of suicide for every day about 13.42 per 100,000 individuals die to the choice of killing themselves. "They can't hurt you physically" you say to yourself, but they can and will and next thing you know you get hurt. Mentally they can hurt you and they will make your heart ache. It could be a peer, a creepy adult or your older sibling or, it can be someone that brought you into this world that is tearing you down but it is all forms of youth violence and we need to stop! As Hellen Keller said, "Never bend your head. Hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye."

Many people have to go through abuse, friends, family but I have one story that happened about 3 years ago. I was walking to school one day, I had just brushed my teeth after eating cap'n crunch which I could still partly taste. I noticed my best friend, she was at the back of school line when normally she's in the front. Normally she's surrounded by friends and a bright smile and her laugh was everything it made you feel happy. Today wasn't one of those days. She had black covering her body, not her skin but her clothing. Her hair looked like a mess and her face looked... well blank. It was now recess I had gone up to her and she wouldn't speak. I heard our peers playing tag on the playground laughing and screaming afraid to get tagged, it smelled almost like it was going to rain. She was sitting on a curb all alone not one person talking to her or asking to play. Recess was then over she went to the back of the line I thought maybe she needed some space maybe to breath. Once it was the end of the day and we had free time where we could go and be with a friend or play a math game or read a book. She surprisingly came up to me and told me she really needed someone. I invited her to hangout at my place thinking she really didn't want to be at hers. She agreed and we walked to my house. We had gone to my room and that is when she let me in on what was going on. She told me that on social media she was getting bullied. Told she was "too nice" and "should stop smiling once and awhile" and that she was "too cheerful" it had really brought her down and changed the way she thought of herself. I felt horrible, I knew I hadn't done anything to cause her pain but I still felt horrible, I invited her for a sleepover and my mom had made her favorite, spaghetti. We talked and laughed and stayed up really late. She left by morning. I had hoped to cheer her up, and I believe I did.

A few things I've noticed that happen with youth violence is, when a person is angry they take it out on something like screaming into a pillow or crying. Other times it can be physical like punching a wall or a person. They also can get very insecure. They

will either hide it or get really mad about it and pick on someone else so they don't see the bullies insecurities. When you drink alcohol you have no idea what you're doing and why you're doing it. Sometimes you are very lovey or crying over nothing, then there's a time you become really angry and you take it out on the first thing you see.

I could help by always checking up on people and my friends to make sure they are okay and if I notice they are a little off or if I notice they have marks all over themselves or I can just tell they aren't doing well I will try and talk to them privately in the counselor's office or somewhere they feel safe. If I can tell they aren't comfortable in their own home I will invite them to mine and try and do something with them to distract them like making something or doing a craft. Some things I can do to be empathetic, try and get rid of all distractions and truly pay attention to them. Try and see it from their point of view and try and help the best I can. I can make it long lasting by being there for them not only if something bad is going to be there for their ups and their downs.

### Anger

It feels you up like your body with water and blood.

It feels like a knife stabbing you in the chest inches from your heart almost killing you almost ending you but it doesn't, it doesn't kill you it just sits there in you chest that only you can feel, then your left with a bush filled with embarrassment blood red tears down your face in your personal pot of feelings and a knife filled with anger that won't hurt a soul.

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