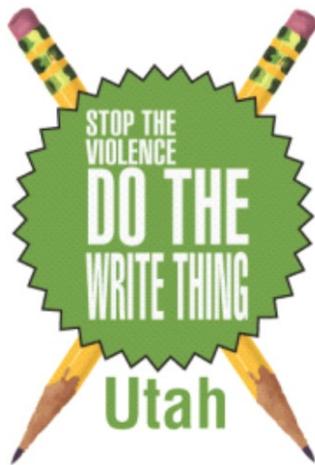


2023

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



**Table of Contents**

Utah’s Challenge ..... 1

**National Finalists**

Madeline Gordon..... 6  
 Zachary Jackson ..... 9

**National Runners-Up**

Kaizen Marsing..... 12  
 Amber Maynard..... 14

**State Finalists**

Alexander Stewart ..... 18  
 Austin Jameson ..... 19  
 Ava Pace..... 20  
 Bailee Deets ..... 21  
 Baylee Fausett..... 22  
 Bryan Don ..... 23  
 Caroline Woodbury..... 24  
 Carter Neilson ..... 27  
 Charlotte Smith..... 29  
 Claire Sylvia ..... 31  
 Dee Kaedence Jacketta ..... 33  
 Evelyn Palomarez..... 34

Gavin Wallenberg ..... 36  
 Giovanni Cruz Agustin..... 38  
 Isabella Parker ..... 40  
 Jackson Neff..... 41  
 Jazleen Echeveste ..... 42  
 Kenley Orton..... 43  
 Leah Sabin..... 44  
 Lisa Taffese ..... 46  
 London Young ..... 47  
 Malakai Richins..... 48  
 Mazia Redmond-Blair ..... 50  
 Natalie Bench ..... 52  
 Olivia Ocana..... 54  
 Riley Banks..... 57  
 Robert Smith..... 59  
 Rudy Guajadoru..... 60  
 Ryder Peterson ..... 62  
 Samara Van Wagenen ..... 64  
 Sierra Davies ..... 65  
 Vierra Powell ..... 68  
 Yarell Loya Dominguez ..... 71  
 Zander Tanner ..... 73

**Committee and Staff**

Membership ..... 75

**2023 Do the Write Thing VIP Judges**

**Emily Green**, *District 14 Board Member*  
*Utah State Board of Education*

**Matt Hymas**, *District 10 Board Member*  
*Utah State Board of Education*

**Parker Johnson**  
*2022 DtWT National Ambassador*

**Lindsey Larsen**  
*Miss Utah 2022*

**Carol Lear**, *District 6 Board Member*  
*Utah State Board of Education*

**Brett Peterson**, *Director*  
*Utah Division of Juvenile Justice and Youth Services*

**Sarah Reale**, *District 5 Board Member*  
*Utah State Board of Education*

**Peter Thompson**  
*2022 DtWT National Ambassador*

**Leah Voorhies**, *Assistant Superintendent of Student Support*  
*Utah State Board of Education*

UTAH'S TWENTY-THIRD 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 Student Services, Student Support Section. The Prevention and Student Services staff support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in implementing a student-focused, evidence-informed, data-driven approach for all prevention work, to promote the knowledge and skills necessary for college and career success and meaningful engagement with their community.

Our mission is to work systemically to provide equitable supports that increases positive childhood experiences and reduces risk factors. Through a protective factors approach, Prevention and Student Services Programs provide resources and supports to reduce the risks of absenteeism, bullying, child abuse, gangs, human trafficking, school dropout, substance use, and suicide. In collaboration with community partners and other stakeholders, these supports are built on a foundation of family engagement, trauma-informed care, and 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 life 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, 750 students prepared writings, and over 250 students submitted writings about youth violence for review. Students from the Salt Lake Community College, University of Utah, and USBE's Student Support Section 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 two runners up.

Utah's National Finalists, or "Ambassadors," 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 who took the Challenge to do something about youth violence!

The Utah State Board of Education's Prevention and Student Services 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, Salt Lake Community College, and University of Utah.

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

# *National Finalists*

*Madeline Gordon*

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

*Zachary Jackson*

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

**Madeline Gordon – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**South Ogden Junior High School – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine**



**Part 1**

**It Was You**

It was you who told me “I don’t believe you”.  
It was you who started those panic attacks.  
It was you who denied everything,  
Flesh and bones being eaten away as the tears streamed down my face: “Liar” “Manipulative” “Cruel”  
“Narcissistic” “Estranged”  
It was you who told me these words, It was you who denied everything, It was you who made me silent  
The vermeil dagger drove into my throat and cut out my vocal cords, and you strung them around my  
arms and sewed my lips shut, and I became a silent puppet  
It was you who made me a puppet with no voice  
Deaf ears and silent lips, no one who believed a dying girl with nothing left, not a whisper that could  
tempt the warmest heart  
It was you who didn’t believe me, It was you who made me a puppet with no whispers, It was you who  
denied everything  
Because sometimes the fulcrum of a moral crisis can sometimes never tip, making balance the worst  
judgment of all, and neutrality the most horrible, cloudy lens on our cruel world  
Cruel, just like me  
It was you who made me this way, it was you who I loved the most, it was you who made me hurt that  
kid.  
It all started with you, but  
It was me who ended it.

Have you ever been betrayed by the person you love the most? You don’t realize it, but you probably have. Maybe it’s a tiny, little lie about eating your broccoli last night, or maybe it’s emotional abuse that lasts for years. Everyone’s been betrayed before, and it goes both ways. When I was younger, I thought the world of my father. Still do; it’s harder to grasp the reality that things simply aren’t the same as when I was younger. When I was ten years old, my father put me in a chokehold to take my phone from me. He wanted the phone so I couldn’t call my mother or my best friend, Kelly. I had the phone in hand, and his arm moved around my neck, sweeping me from the phone and his other arm reaching for it. My eyes widened and tears began streaming out as his elbow came closer and closer to my chin, and my arms moved from the phone to get his arms off of my neck. My father realized what he was doing and let me go once he had my phone.

When I was eleven years old, more than a year later, my father knocked on a door to get to me. It was a locked, sound-proof, bolted-to-the-wall door, and when it came slamming down, it was two feet away from where I was standing. After the obstacle was out of his way, he marched toward me. Speechless, I ran all the way upstairs and locked myself in my room, crying out of pure terror, and my father let me go. Both of these situations caused me emotional pain, and while there wasn’t any physical evidence, that’s the real knife that stabbed me in the back. In both of these situations, I called my mother, the only light in this deep, dark well of fear. With the door inexplicably ripped off its hinges, my mother called the police. A police officer came to my father’s house a few minutes later, and my father explained that: “This was just a huge mistake.” And, of course, it was a huge mistake– he knocked down a door to get to me! But in the context of his narcissism, I was the one who made a mistake, and he made it really clear to me afterwards. “Nothing’s wrong,” he continued. “Everything’s okay.”

And then the police officer left. No inspection of the house, nothing. That officer just left, accepting the explanation my father had given him. No one believed me when I told them that my dad ripped a door off its hinges. Just because that police officer didn’t come inside the house to make sure that what I was saying was true, Dad had it repaired the next day to hide the evidence. Now, whenever I ask him about it, he tells me, “That’s not what happened at all!” The scar that the denial left me has haunted me for

years now. It's been my word against his. It's like my father tore out my vocal strings and tied them into a knot. I could have blared the most awful, eerie, tragic scream in the whole world, and you wouldn't have heard me. I lost my voice.

A few months ago, in May 2022, I got to talk to another police officer after my father left me feeling unsafe. When the officer knocked on the door, and my father answered, he began with: "Everything's fine, this is just a huge misunderstanding--"

And at that very moment, I got my voice back. I called out and I said, "Everything's not fine. I'm not fine. I don't feel safe." That was my chance to speak out, and even though very little changed, it just felt different like I had made a difference. Small yet huge.

A few months later, I had a panic attack in October and November. My father said the words, "I don't believe you." I broke. My reality shattered. No tears left to cry, no comfort in knowing. These words bounced off the walls and rang in my ears like a lost wail of a mockingbird long since dead. Again and again and again and again, never stopping, never quitting, never acknowledging what it could do to me. It was like a shockwave, returning again until it shatters what it wants to, and, in this case, there is no target. I got up off the floor and stared in the mirror, as my tears stopped streaming down my cheeks and my eyes glowed red from blood. For a moment, the echo seemed to stop, giving me peace, until I gave in, and the mirror showing my reflection shattered.

I had no idea how I was supposed to respond, so I didn't. I tried to do anything; ANYTHING that could anchor me to reality. I couldn't have this happen again, because the consequences far outweighed anything that my mental stability could have saved. I tried putting on a perfume my mother gave to me; it smelled like our favorite place, and it felt like a warm embrace as she picked up the pieces of my broken soul, but it wouldn't last. Soon I felt as if she slipped away, returning to a place only about three miles from this place, but it felt like a million. The salty tears I thought had stopped fell into my mouth, and they slowly enveloped every lens of my world. "I don't believe you," you told me. I don't think I believed myself either.

Even writing this now, I know I might get in trouble, but isn't that the whole point? Instead of burying my terrible, wonderful, amazing and horrible voice, instead of hiding my true pain, instead of letting other people tell fables about real things, I'm using my voice for something that could help kids like me, and I will scream.

## Part 2

### Silence

There are no words left for me.

Silence is boundless.

Silence is empty.

Silence is eerie.

When I move these lips, nothing but silent screams echo through the lonely void.

Silence is lonely.

Silence is chaos.

Echoes tell the story. Scars of the violence inflicted on me. Yet, there are no markings. Nothing to prove that I was hurt in ways unimaginable.

Therefore,

Silence is deadly.

Bullying is a cycle that so many people get caught in. It's almost never-ending, and yet it somehow resolves itself. It always starts with the victim or the person who's being bullied. Then, they themselves start to bully someone else out of spite. Then, that someone becomes a bully and so on and so forth. An endless cycle. Self-loathing is a major cause of youth violence. According to Rebecca Grodner, bullying is a system, and we need to break it. In my opinion, self-loathing is that cycle. It just goes round and round and round in the endless cycle of hurt and pain until we decide to say that bullying isn't just the bully and victim, they're just people. According to the National Bullying Prevention Center, the prevalence of bullying has been at 28% since 2005. Although 2005 seems like a long time ago, it was only about 77 years ago that Jews were being tortured and murdered just for being themselves, and that was perhaps

one of the greatest instances of bullying in history. The only way that bullies can still be prevalent for more than 17 years, at 28%, is if people are feeling bad about themselves. In fact, if 46% of bullied students tell an adult about the bully, then shouldn't bullies be done, because they're just inflictors? No, they should be over, but even if it's been decreased to 28%, they still exist, because the bullies are being bullied themselves, and that makes them want to bully others, just to feel better about themselves. I have had this experience too, and although no one who's been bullied before wants to hear how their bully is hurting too, it's the truth; the victim might just become the bully if they can't accept that.

Everyone needs to have someone that'll listen and believe them, but what if you don't have that person? I feel that if people are not willing to listen or pick a side, the cycle will continue for the rest of eternity. I use the metaphor of a puppet to show that there are so many things out of our control, but cutting our own strings isn't one of those. Dante says that the hottest places in hell are meant for those who don't do anything for the victim or the bully. So, this is a message for all of those who've ignored someone being bullied. And, no, there's no such thing as a bully. Only people who are hurting. My experience has told me that if you don't speak up when your time is right, you'll lose it, and the pain will continue to wash over you, tsunami after tsunami. If that person doesn't believe you, you might feel hopeless. But you have to write your speech onto someone else like a tattoo. Like it's written in their own blood. And tell people you trust.

As for what I can do to stop youth violence, I'll start with my own dilemma. I'll speak out to someone, because if I don't, I'll just start another cycle of puppeteering. There's a quote by Martin Luther King Jr. that basically summarizes everything I'm fighting for: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." I was silent for a long time. Everyone was silent for a long time. No one really began to listen to people with mental illness, African Americans, children, even, for a long time. And still, there are people who won't listen. They just get caught up in their own illusions that they can't escape them. I know that people can and will do this. And not being believed is maybe the worst thing that can happen to a living, human being. The issue isn't that kids are being bullied; the issue is that when kids are telling someone they trust that they're being bullied, they're not doing anything about it. We're always told as kids that if we're feeling suicidal, or someone is abusing us, or if we're just not feeling great, to tell a trusted adult. Well, when has that gotten me anywhere?

I wanted to start this essay by saying that kids need to speak out. But that's not the problem. It's that no one will listen. Or believe. So, I'll ask again: everyone needs to have someone that'll listen and believe them, but what if you don't have that person? If a kid goes up and tells you that they're being bullied, you better listen to them. Do not make kids mute, because they might just go deaf as well.

### Finale

#### Mute

You made me mute.

Years of therapy ahead and behind me, yet they're all deaf.

"Madi, they're making fun of me"

"Madi, they're telling me that they want to beat me up"

"Madi, they're calling me a nerd"

I don't *want* to hear anything

I don't *want* to say anything

"Madi, I want to kill myself"

First I was mute

And now I'm deaf,

My puppet has cut my ears off,

But there is a way to hear again,

Listen.

"Madi, you saved me"

I refuse to make someone, anyone

Mute.

Zachary Jackson – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High School – Teacher, Dustin Flores



### **How does Youth Violence Affect the World?**

Youth violence is a plague in the world. More infectious and more deadly than the black death. Without action being taken by people of every age to stop it, the mental and physical health of youth around the world will continue to decrease. Youth violence can easily be stopped if enough people would be willing to help remove this draining parasite from people around them. Whether this be at school or at home, being surrounded by violence through yourself or through others will only lead to a downfall of health and self-esteem.

### **What are the Causes of Youth Violence?**

I had always thought that my elementary school life was pretty much free of youth violence and bullying. I hadn't bullied anyone as my home life had taught me that it will only lead to negatives. I also had never really been bullied, nor had I seen my friends bullied. I had assumed that pretty much everyone I was associated with was not affected by youth violence. But youth violence is a lot more than just the stereotypical bullying. Youth violence is a lot more dynamic than that. If I were to ever see someone getting beat up on the ground, I would always step in and stop it to the best of my ability, and most everyone else would too, but different types of youth violence are harder to spot and stop. As a young kid in elementary school, I now realize that the system for kids that were acting poorly was somewhat rewarding for them for acting aggressively! There was one kid who was always very disruptive and got into fights, and he would be taken out of class as "punishment", and then get to punch the punching bag outside of class for not violating a rule. He never stopped his violence he just skipped class to get some "reward" for not being violent or super poorly behaved for a day. It was like feeding a fire with gasoline to put it out. This only enhances the violence and improves the chances of recurrence. This violence did spread through a rough group, as they would then also get into fights and break rules, and then get rewarded for not doing it for a day. Even if they didn't consciously think this, the system was just showing violence as a way to earn extra rewards. I was never involved in this violence, and I received minimal rewards and the attention and time out of class was increased for the kids who participated in youth violence. I also know that not many of the kids had strong emotional support or strong family lives, so that caused a lot of the violence, and it still is! Without strong emotional control, they would channel anger from their own hardships onto other people, and become part of the infectious disease.

### **How has Youth Violence Affected My Life?**

Until junior high, my life was seemingly free of violence. I tried to be nice to everyone, or if I didn't like someone, I would ignore him/her. Everything was fine until this year, when a specific short cheerleader entered my life. Her violence wasn't the typical uppercut to the jaw and roundhouse to the face, but a mountain isn't always destroyed by an earthquake, erosion can wear it away quickly as well. I would see some of my peers getting insulted by her or vice versa. I would try and shut down the negative comments. I wanted to be nice and it seemed unnecessary to insult. Although as time went on, she became a parasite damaging my body, heart, and property. Body: It started off with just shouldering me in the hall, and then smacking me in the head. My kidneys would be elbowed and my knees would be kicked when I would be talking with my friends, and she would push me out of where I was in the hall. This wasn't just me... Many of my friends had told me stories about YEARS that they had been punched hard and kicked as well! We were rewarding her with the punching bag this time. Heart: I'm not perfect, and no one is, and she made that clear, especially about me. Any time I would try to add something to a conversation, the hypocritical hyena would automatically shout at me to shut up, and that she "didn't ask". If I tried to respond I would be shut up and shut down. My friends in the conversation also couldn't do anything for fear of being kicked in the shins. She would insult my abilities if I didn't do perfect! When I would miss a question in class or do something

slightly incorrectly, all that came out of her was "You're stupid; You're an idiot" Mistakes are a way of growth, and shouldn't be something that is used to attack. One time I had received runner up for President of my grade, and she told me that I was not good enough, things like "Why couldn't you make president, huh? You're just not good enough for that." Although I knew these things weren't true, it's hard to push away every boulder of insults rolling down a hill toward someone. Property: I was forced to attend the same events that this girl was at because we were both supposed to represent the school. There were multiple times where, at these events, my things, and the things owned by a teacher were stolen and disrespected by her. I was told to bring treats that were given out to the school representatives already (such as her and I) inside. I was then chased and begged to give out extra to her. I ran inside and she cornered me and then I tripped when trying to avoid her. She then stole extra and said she would give it back, but she lied to me, and ate it as I had expected. That didn't directly hurt me but I felt guilty for losing control of the school's property, and even after I told a teacher, she received little to no repercussions, which just gave her more power. Many youth are chased inside into their own corner trying to control something to make either themselves or others happy. When they are tripped emotionally, many don't think to talk to a teacher, and instead transfer this sadness/guilt into more violence. Many youth can't deal with these situations on their own, so it is important to put all of our effort into helping them. At a separate one of these events, she stomped on my friend's expensive shoes, and then would call him racist when he tried to retaliate. (Because she was African-American.) She then stole my \$200 dollar school officer sweater, and ran off. I knew that pursuing her would only cause her to act like the victim when someone would see me trying to get my stuff back, so I just went inside to fill my water bottle. She then came to me after 5 minutes and threw my sweater on the dirty hallway floor and refused to pick it up. It was super disrespectful, but there was nothing I thought I could really do about it at the time...

**What can my Community and I do to Reduce Youth Violence?**

"What sets you apart can sometimes feel like a burden and it's not. And a lot of the time, it's what makes you great." – Emma Stone; All of the youth around the world need to understand that their differences are what makes them special, and it shouldn't be something holding you back or causing you to drive anger onto others. One day I had stomped on the cheerleader foot when she elbowed me and pushed me out of my conversation. She then yelled and cussed at me and she was all of a sudden the victim once again. My friends then told me I need to be the bigger person and control myself, even though I had barely scratched the surface of what she had done to everyone. I knew they were right. Channeling my anger to get revenge would only lead to the downfall of everyone. This is when I realized my friends and I had experienced enough of the insults, ignorance, and injuries, and we went to indict. We filed a report in the office of the school. There were then helpless "why?"s and "what did I do?"s that she threw at me. I ignored these remarks because I knew I didn't need to recite them. The violence has now stopped. I have not had to have any more youth violence directly in my life, and I don't think anyone else should have to either. When someone is insulting or stealing from someone else, tell someone, especially someone with power. Life is still rough in general because you can't stop violence until it has already appeared. I had strong good examples in my home and chose at a young age that I would not participate in that type of stuff. The effects of this are great for me and the people I'm around, but it has not spread out very far, which has caused a ton of violence that could have been prevented. Many youth don't have this guide and instead are going through school blind, just looking for their "punching bag" to make it easier. Be an example to others and make the choice now to stay out of youth violence, and stomp out the flames that arise. Base your life on good morals and teach others to do the same. It can and will stop pain/suicide from arising in the lives of all the youth around you.

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

*National  
Runners-Up*

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

*Amber Maynard*  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Roy Junior High School  
Teacher, Maria Georgiou

Kaizen Marsing – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
West Jordan Middle School – Teacher, Stacey Sawyer



Backyard Buddy

Last April, I lost one of my best friends Eli Mitchell to a tragic yet violent auto-bicycle collision. Eli was returning from Smiths when he was hit and killed by a drunk driver. He went to Smiths to use his new debit card to spend his money on some treats. Before hearing the news of the accident, my family passed the scene not knowing what had taken place. As we were driving home from my baseball game, traffic slowed, and I saw the caution tape marking off the road. I was wondering what had happened and the last thing that I would have thought was that a drunk driver had run over one of my best friends and left him there to die. Around two hours after my baseball game, my dad got a phone call from one of our close friends and went into a closed room to talk to my mom about what had happened. A couple of minutes later my parents came out of the room and shared the news with me and my two younger sisters. The shock of the news was upsetting, we just sat on my parent's bed sharing our feelings and crying together.

Eli and I became friends when I moved into the neighborhood at three years old. Our backyards pretty much connected, the only thing that was in the way was a fence. When we would want to hang out with each other we would just find a way to get over the fence and knock on each other's back doors. After a couple of years of hopping the fence both of our parents agreed that there needed to be a solution before one of us broke the fence. The main solution was putting in a gate but in the meantime, a ladder was placed connecting our backyards and easier access to my best friend. As we got older Eli would bring his computer, headset, mouse, controller, and all the necessary items to play his best game.

Once Eli and I got old enough to start making some money off of mowing lawns we would take trips on foot or on our bikes to the local gas stations and grocery stores to get 2-liter bottles of Coke, Dr Pepper, chips, and treats to fuel us while we played our video games. Our favorite games to play were Minecraft, Rocket League, Rec Room, Call of Duty, Halo, and Fortnite. The ladder still connects our backyards to this day and that will never change, but one thing that has changed is I don't have a best friend waiting for me at his back door.

After the accident, the news stories were filled with images of Eli's shoe, treats, and backpack scattered on the road. One of the most disturbing things about this accident that made me feel the angriest was that the drunk driver went into a nearby parking lot, pulled my best friend's bike out from underneath his truck, and fled the scene. How can someone be that disrespectful and careless? Why was I not with him? Would I have been hurt too or would I have somehow protected him? These are all questions that still run through my mind.

This man had 3 DUIs before this accident, why did he even get his license back? He shouldn't have the right to drive if he hasn't been able to get the help he needs to be driving sober on the roads. Why does our justice system allow people to make the same mistakes that end up costing an innocent person their life? This man was out on the road that day, after having seven 20-ounce beers. I would be hanging out with my friend to this day, if it weren't for this man's inability to get the help he needed to understand the risk he was taking by getting behind the wheel.

Boys riding their bikes on public streets shouldn't fear for their lives. Eli put on his helmet that day and was using the crosswalk system both things that as kids we are taught to keep us safe. We need adults to start acting more responsible when it comes to driving. We need more accountability so bars don't over-serve their customers. We need every adult to realize the danger they are to our communities when drinking and driving. If we kids are expected to take our safety seriously why does that change when you become an adult? We need a justice system that holds people accountable until they have made the proper changes in their lives.

This accident has caused me to feel really angry, it's hard sometimes being a kid and not knowing what to do with the anger that I feel. Eli was a kind, and carefree type of person, it wasn't in him to be angry. I know that Eli wouldn't want me to act out on my anger, so one way that I have chosen to remember him is by trying to be kind like he was in our community and to me. Our community has done a lot of things together to remember Eli, and honor him. Some things we have done are made neckties, and bracelets that are engraved with the words, Live Like Eli. We have lined the streets with luminaries, spray painted a ghost bike as friends, as a memorial, and put together the twelve days of Eli for Christmas. As I have participated and tried to focus on positive ways to remember Eli, it has helped me to soften the anger that I feel. I think it's important that when I am hurt and dealing with overwhelming emotions I find positive ways to express the pain of this loss. I think it's important for people to find meaning in their pain, as this helps to stop the cycle of violence and carelessness.

It is hard enough being a teenager and controlling the everyday emotions that I feel. It is even harder to control these emotions when adults make bad choices that harm others and don't feel bad about them. Drinking and Driving ruin lives and should be considered murder when someone dies, especially a kid.

**Amber Maynard – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Roy Junior High School – Teacher, Maria Georgiou**



It's all still there

The darkness overcomes you  
There's nothing you can do  
Just stand there and watch it happen

It's a never ending story  
that has only just begun

She's your sister  
You want it to stop  
But all you can do is watch

The darkness envelops both of you  
There's barely any light  
But you have to hold on to the little brightness there still is

After what seems like a eternity  
Everything gets better  
Once he's out of the picture  
But the trauma is still there

The pain  
The agony  
The suffering

Are all still there

**My Story:**

I would like to say I've been the lucky one in these situations. I have experienced different types of youth violence throughout my life, bullying, narcissistic step parents, but the main one is child abuse. My sister and I are close in age, when I was four she was six. Around that age is when I felt my life turn upside down. There were many incidents where my sister was abused and I was just standing there not knowing what to do. I can remember going to bed without dinner and not being allowed out of our room for hours. My young mind never really noticed how bad these situations were; I thought this is how everyone's dad treated them. Only now do I realize how wrong I was. My mom worked graveyard shifts so she wasn't home. I recall one time on my birthday my sister was trying to put tin-foil on my cake, and she cut it wrong. She was shoved into a counter and had bruises on her back. To this day my sister still can't stand the sound of tin-foil let alone cutting it. I don't think people realize that when something like this happens you are scarred, and it's a scar no one can see. You put it behind a brick wall in your mind. At times I think the brick wall in my mind is a million miles high. I blocked out these incidents because I didn't know how to cope with them. Neither did my sister, but she was the one that was protecting me. She didn't have anyone like that. She is now 16 years old and she goes to therapy and a psychiatrist regularly. When she was in 8th grade she went to the psych ward at McKay-Dee Hospital three times in a span of two months for suicidal urges. She has flashbacks of some incidents that happened; she explained it to me as, you're taken back and you're witnessing it all

again and there's nothing you can do to stop it, and you can't differentiate what's real and what's fake.

What is Youth Violence?

In the article "Types of Violence Involving Youth" the author says, "Youth violence can be defined as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or group that results in high likelihood of injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation among persons ages 10 to 24" (1). In simple terms youth violence is violence towards youth, someone under 24 years of age. This can happen in many different ways. Some situations where youth violence occurs are bullying, child sex trafficking, domestic violence, child abuse, gun violence, school shootings, dating violence, suicide or self harm, and gang related violence. Youth violence may occur in many different circumstances. You can experience one of them or many of them throughout your childhood.

What Causes Youth Violence?

There are many different causes of youth violence. In the article "Overview of Child Neglect and Abuse" Alicia R. Pekarsky says, "Some factors that increase the risk of child neglect and abuse are parents who are young or single-parenting, have experienced child abuse or neglect themselves, or have personal or family stress (such as food insecurity, financial stress, intimate partner violence, social isolation, mental health issues, or a substance use disorder)" (1). There are many different contributors that would have parents consider abusing their child. Some people have intrusive thoughts, and they do things without thinking rationally. This can lead to harmful effects to themselves or others. While these are some causes of child abuse, it is just a small category of youth violence. There are many other reasons why youth violence may be acted upon.

How Can We Stop Youth Violence?

Youth violence is a big deal, and it needs to be addressed. In school I'm on Hope Squad and we have trainings on how to address different types of youth violence. We are taught warning signs of suicide, and how to be a good listeners so others will want to come to you. We also learn to be good friends and people. I have gone through different types of youth violence throughout my life and I know how to spot that something is going on. I try my hardest to either stop the situation or get someone to help. I've stopped a few situations but if I'm the only one trying to help with things like then it's not going to work. We need to get more people in the community that are willing to help. I feel like we need to be friends and encourage each other for the better. Even just doing simple acts of kindness like saying hello or opening a door for them can shine a little bit of light in day. Just let people know that if something is going on in their lives someone can relate, someone can help, someone can; but they won't be able to if you don't ask.

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



*State Finalists*

*Alexander Stewart*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Summit Academy  
Teacher, Kim Arminen

*Austin Jameson*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Meagan Dommer

*Ava Pace*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, South Sevier Middle School  
Teacher, Lesia Coe

*Bailee Deets*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Uinta Middle School  
Teacher, Sarah Anderson

*Baylee Fausett*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Diamond Fork Middle School  
Teacher, Scott Tippetts

*Bryan Don*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Linda Lujan

*Caroline Woodbury*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. Vincent's School  
Teacher, Rachel Nemelka

*Carter Neilson*

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

*Charlotte Smith*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School  
Teacher, Meagan Dommer

*Claire Sylvia*

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

*Dee Kaedence Jacketta*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Thomas Jefferson Junior High  
School  
Teacher, Marissa Neeley

*Evelyn Palomarez*

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

*Gavin Wallenberg*

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

*Giovani Cruz Agustin*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valley Junior High School  
Teacher, DeMarie Hoover

*Isabella Parker*

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

*Jackson Neff*

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

*Jazleen Echeveste*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valley Junior High School  
Teacher, DeMarie Hoover

*Kenley Orton*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Sand Ridge Junior High School  
Teacher, Amy Kendell

*Leah Sabin*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Lehi Junior High School  
Teacher, Chance Carter

*Lisa Taffese*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Thomas Jefferson Junior High  
School  
Teacher, Marissa Neeley

*London Young*

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

*Malakai Richins*

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

*Mazia Redmond-Blair*

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

*Natalie Bench*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Promontory School of  
Expeditionary Learning  
Teacher, Shawna Andreasen

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO DO THE WRITE THING

---

*Olivia Ocana*

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

*Riley Banks*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Linda Lujan

*Robert Smith*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Diamond Fork Middle School  
Teacher, Rachael Gunn

*Rudy Guajardoru*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Sand Ridge Junior High School  
Teacher, Amy Kendell

*Ryder Peterson*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Anna McNamer

*Samara Van Wagenen*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Anna McNamer

*Sierra Davies*

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

*Vierra Powell*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Ephraim Middle School  
Teacher, Steve Weller

*Yarell Loya Dominguez*

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

*Zander Tanner*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade, South Sevier Middle School  
Teacher, Lesia Coe

Alexander Stewart – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy – Teacher, Kim Arminen



The Differences

Differences in life seem to be all around us  
Why is that the cause for people to pound us  
Always self conscious  
what they think of us  
If its bad  
If they don't agree  
Why can't i just be me  
Why can't i like this or that  
What if i dress like that  
If i have my hair like that  
Always judging on how we look  
And what we like  
People think your weird  
people think your dumb  
Makes me feel like i'm just eatin there crumbs  
If they don't agree then they laugh hehe

Putin themselves all the way up above me  
I guess those who do are the ones who struggle too  
Never knowing how to deal with there own trauma  
sending people crying back to mama  
Lashing out on others  
Everyone struggling in their own way  
Going through life with a map that was never made  
Finding out what to do  
We all suffer from both parts no matter when and who  
I believe that if you try to be a better person  
Not be so negative of the differences in life  
Surround yourself in people that accept your differences  
Being ok with others differences  
Cause differences “are” all around us  
And that should be ok

-Alexander Stewart

**Austin Jameson – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Dommer**



### Youth Violence

One day when I was walking home from school with my friend, somebody we were talking to brought up killing himself. At first I thought that he was kidding but it was for real. My friend could figure that out too. He talked with him for the rest of the way home. When we reached my house I went in and immediately got my chromebook out of my backpack and emailed my counselor. I wanted somebody from the school to know what happened. I learned from this that it is extremely important to confront them and try to change their mind and to let them know that they matter.

The causes for this situation could be: anxiety, depression, unhappiness, parents not treating him the way he should be, social media, friends, PTSD, and unacceptance. In my opinion, the most likely cause is depression because he has said that before on the walks home. Very Well Family states “Peer pressure plays a pivotal role in youth violence, especially because kids are more likely to engage in risky or violent behaviors when they act as a group. Teens who normally would not be aggressive or violent on their own often feel empowered when in a group. Additionally, teens are more likely to be violent or aggressive when they feel pressured. They also may become violent in order to maintain their place in the group. Peer pressure can lead teens to engage in risk-taking behaviors.” This could’ve been another reason because he could’ve felt pressured by his friends to do it. Stone Water Recovery states “Teens who have to deal with negative circumstances in their life such as their parents splitting up, dealing with bullying, or the death of a loved one may feel like they have no option other than wanting to die. When big events like these happen in their life, parents need to keep a close eye on their behaviors, emotions, and verbiage.” Parents need to watch their kids and try to keep them from trying to commit suicide.

What I can do now is help those who could be struggling sitting with them or inviting them to sit with my friend group at lunch. Another day at school during lunch I invited a kid who was by himself to join my table. He came and became one of my best friends still to this day. I learned from this that it is good to make new friends. They could be struggling mentally and nobody would know about it. I could, if I knew, talk to a responsible adult about the problems of others. They would know what to do better. I could also invite them over to my house or to a place where we could talk and hope to become friends with them. Be The 1 to says that the 5 best ways to stop someone from committing suicide are to ask, to be there for them, to try to help them be safe, to help them connect, and to follow up. Using these ways of treating them can save their life. They can learn and know that they matter to you. They can get past the suicidal thoughts and live.

Ava Pace – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Sevier Middle School – Teacher, Lesia Coe



Youth violence.

Youth suffering.

When there is youth violence, some of the effects are irreversible. Most youth violence people don't know about, not adults, in many cases not even friends know what is happening. Youth violence is not just physical abuse, it can be things that people say that affect you mentally. When something is said, it can't be taken back.

The causes of youth violence can be many things, maybe it's just a difference in opinion. There could be for no reason, or the personal suffering of the person inflicting that violence. Many times it could be the opinion of others that in turn makes you violent toward yourself.

Luckily I have not suffered through youth violence that I know many people have, however, I have seen it happen to those around me. The youth violence in my life is minimal. Mostly I see it with kids calling each other mean names or making fun of as the intention of joking with them, but is that still really okay? Even if the intention is to joke around with your friend, many people have things they suffer through like parental disputes or an abundant amount of stress, without youth violence. When something is said that is hurtful or mean, the person given the youth violence may take it the wrong way.

Some effects of youth violence can be extreme, some can be mild but all are hurtful. We as a community need to make sure that youth violence can be stopped, or slowed. We also need to make sure that adults are aware of what's happening so they know how to stop the violence.

One way I and all others around me can be better about youth violence is to be more understanding of what others may be going through. If we can learn to listen to others we will know what is happening behind what we see every day. We can also be more mindful of what we say and do to others. We can be the person in whatever situation that listens and supports instead of judges. A final thing that you can do is to report what you see or hear. Many times when there is youth violence people will see or hear something and never say anything. Adults around you can't do anything to help those who are being hurt unless they know what is going on, so make sure you let someone know.

Unfortunately, youth violence happens everywhere. We as a community need to be aware of this and make sure that we help out in any way we can to stop the effects of youth violence from getting worse. Be mindful of the effects of youth violence and try to help stop it in any way you can.

**Bailee Deets - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Uinta Middle School - Teacher, Sarah Anderson**



Today, I am here to express why I believe youth violence happens everywhere, mainly in schools. Youth violence can and probably has affected everyone's lives. I know from some experiences whether it occurs physically, mentally, or socially. For me, it has happened in schools. Whenever I walk out of a classroom I hear swear words and I see friends supposedly joking around with each other by shoving and pushing. The worst of it all though is in one class when I sit next to this kid. But since I am a woman I hear it in classrooms I walk in and this kid just says over and over "imagine being a woman". So that makes me feel like I am worth nothing and that because of my gender I can not accomplish anything.

But it does not just happen in person. I believe the cause of youth violence is because of social media. I have found in a reading something that I believe will help support my belief. "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." (Author Brittany Bostic, Article Does Social Media Perpetuate Youth Violence?) So it proves that this social media can have a bad outcome on your brain. Some people might think that if everyone else is doing it, it must be a trend so they do it as well because that is all they see.

While I can not do anything to stop what people post on the internet I can try to peer pressure them in the opposite direction. Think of it like this. They want to do something and they tell you. You as either their friend or just as another student can stand up and say to do something else. But you can also talk to them to make sure they are okay. Thank you for your time, I hope you enjoyed my perspective on youth violence.

**Baylee Fausett – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Scott Tippetts**



A Helping Hand

Youth violence has affected many lives in many different ways. It creates many problems in today's world. Why does it happen? Why is violence so common in youth? Youth violence can lead to depression, injuries, and sometimes even death. How has youth violence affected others' lives? What are the causes? What are some solutions? Many people blame it on social media or video games. Bad things do happen on social media or online video games. People say things to other people online that they would never say to them in person. Youth violence is a huge problem today.

I have always been short for my size. Short and insanely quiet. My friends would tease me jokingly, and I was usually okay with that. Sometimes people would call me short in the hallways of school but I would ignore them. It wasn't something I could control, so I shouldn't care, right? If anybody else would call me short, my friends and family would stand up for me.

Youth violence has affected my life in some negative ways, but not nearly as bad as other lives. I see youth violence in the hallways at school, but a teacher is always there to stop it. Other kids stand up for themselves and others. But sometimes, it goes too far. Youth violence has caused many problems. People get depression, and others hurt themselves thinking that it will bring them satisfaction. It really doesn't.

There are many causes of youth violence. Bullying is just one. People are bullies because they probably have something bad going on in their life. People bully others because they think it will bring them happiness by putting others down. Many people have been bullied, and lost their life due to it. It's a very sad thing. Others hurt themselves thinking it will make the pain of being bullied go away. Abuse is another cause of youth violence. When people hear abuse, most people think physical. Abuse can be verbal, and it hurts some people very badly. It's not just in school and with friends. These things can happen with family as well. Mental and physical abuse can lead to depression. So can bullying. Some people get made fun of for something they can't control. Some people are short, or really tall. Some people talk a little funny, or can't walk. Some people are born with disabilities that hold them back from doing some things. People make fun of them for that.

Cyberbullying is also another cause of youth violence. People say mean things to others on social media or other online platforms. People say things over text because they can't bring themselves to say it in person. People go on social media, and they compare themselves to others. It brings them down a lot. People say hurtful comments about people. There are many different causes that happen in many different lives.

How can my community and I resolve youth violence. We can not solve it completely, but we can help. We can be friendly to people. We can invite people to hangout with us at school if we see them sitting alone. We can try to stand up for people more than usual. We can ask friends not to talk behind peoples' backs. We can be more inviting in class and at lunch. We can talk to people who we don't know. We can just be more friendly overall.

Youth violence has taken negative effects on many peoples' lives. I got very lucky with my friends and my family. I have great friends who will stand up for me in school. I have a great family who will stand up for me at home. We can become friends will more people who need it, and be the friends that will stand up for them if they need it. Maybe some people need to take breaks from social media, or have certain amounts of screen time allowed per day. My parents give us certain screen times, and it helps.

**Bryan Don – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Northwest Middle School - Teacher, Linda Lujan**



Family Problems

Youth violence has affected me by self-image. An event that happened in my lifetime was, I use to get bullied for my body looks and my weight. Another cause of youth violence is, I got peer pressured to smoke and do things I was not supposed to do. Also, divorce with my mom and dad. It made it hard for my mom to get money. Last, my dad started using drugs/alcohol. It effected my dad by him having to go to Mexico for 4 years and it made it hard for me. My parents would always get angry if I didn't have good grades or if I did not have good behavior. My mom would get mad if I did not do something right or if I did not do the things I was supposed to do and to my siblings.

Youth violence effected my life by me feeling unsafe because, my dad had to go to Mexico for my long time and I felt alone without him. My education was affecting me by not being able to do my work and not getting good grades. Also, it made it hard for my mom to find a job and me being sad for what my mom is going through. Next, depression hit me a little bit because, it was hard for me and my family. Another thing is that money was problem for my mom because, she was not getting paid a lot at her work. Also, it made it hard for my mom because we had to move to another house and get a new car but, it was expensive for my mom to pay for the car. Another one is, I felt sad on the day on my birthday because my dad was not able to make it to my birthday because, my dad in Mexico for 4 years and missed my mom, brother and sister birthday too.

What can I do about youth violence? I can work on myself by being a lot nicer and being helpful to people even if I don't know them. Next, I can step up for myself by being a leader and doing right things. Another one is, spread out more positivity out into the world by posting good things on social media and make friends with new people. Also, I can work on my behavior and my attitude, not giving people a hard time or making fun of people. I can always do the right thing and tell an adult if something bad is going to happen. I can always tell my mom or dad or my family if somethings are happening. I can tell my friends to stop doing bad things and start taking a good path. I can change the way that I act because I can maybe be harmful to people if I'm joking around with people. I can think about I am going to say before I say it because, I don't want to cause any problems.

Caroline Woodbury – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
St. Vincent's School – Teacher, Rachel Nemelka



Youth Violence

I have seen  
The hand scared to shoot up in class  
An outcast who stopped caring long ago  
Wrists with bloody tallies  
Folded into fabric hiding places  
Marking the mistakes of that day  
Hands screwed up in hair  
As eyes that forgot they last time they closed  
stare  
at a laptop  
Clicking idly  
I remember  
A quaking figure hunched  
While we desperately shut the blinds and  
hide  
at the front of the classroom  
Making ourselves small  
I shut my eyes  
Where I can't see our teachers fear  
My family's faces branded into my eyes  
While we sit in the dark  
Listening for the sounds of our schoolmates being shot  
I hear  
A quiet ping as my friend  
Messages me  
About wanting to end  
A feeling of helplessness  
That can't be shaken  
Sinking into me  
I try to talk to them  
Until the messages  
s  
T  
O  
p  
and I begin to dread the next day  
For fear they might not be in the house across from me  
But rather in the morgue across town

I know  
That I can't stop what they feel  
I can't stop their pain  
I can't stop their apathy  
I can't stop their loss  
I can't stop their fear  
I can't stop the smile and laugh that hide it all

I **can** stop them being alone

Youth violence has never affected me directly, but those who are so close to me that it hurts me almost as much. Several of my loved ones have been bullied and I have seen how it turned them from smiling, easy-going children, to quiet, somber teenagers who are stuck in their own thoughts. I wrote this poetry about my experiences with my loved ones, to share their stories and show how bullying affects people from an outsider's perspective. The bullies' poor self esteem and stress of their lives can cause them to lash out against others, with words or actions. The people they lash out against can become bullies themselves or turn the bullying inwards towards themselves. These victims don't believe they are good enough and have low self-esteem. I have seen this happen first hand and these victims of bullying need someone to be there for them to help them get help. The outward bullies if not dealt with grow from violent youth to violent adults. Sometimes when the bully is removed from their situation at home by growing up they become better, kinder people, who regret what they did when they were younger, because it wasn't who they are. There are other bullies who grow up and the stress and baggage of childhood comes with them into adulthood. Until they unpack that and learn to change habits to be kinder these people remain bullies in adult life.

One of the main barriers preventing bullies, young or old, from changing is lack of support from those closest to them and society. If as a society we gave more attention to the mental health of everyone and made resources for help available to everyone and easily accessible, bullies and their victims would become better people. The resources we could offer could include everything from healthy coping mechanism ideas, to free in-person mental health support. As one person I can help stop bullying by giving support to the victims and stand up to the bullies. I may not be able to always be there for my loved ones because lots of my friends don't go to my school, but I can give them my unwavering support and love. My loved ones who I wrote about are doing better than they have for a long, long time now that they have gained the support they need. Sometimes all a person can do is be there. Although whenever I see bullying, even if it is not someone I am close to being bullied, I will stand up for them or get a teacher to spot it. I don't want anyone to hurt like my loved ones did.

The second stanza of my poem delves into the fear that students are faced with in America, a shooter on campus. The specific story that stanza was based on didn't involve an actual active shooter but a drill, thankfully. The fear and uncertainty was there all the same. This happened this past year during my science class. The intruder announcement came through the crackly intercom. We rushed around shutting the 3 huge windows around the room. All of the students weren't sure if it was a drill or if it was a real shooter coming to kill us. As we sit in the very front of the room I notice my friend shaking violently and quietly sobbing. My friend near her was comforting her. I was so worried about her, but I couldn't move because there were 3 people in between us and it would make too much noise to move over to her. Immediately after the drill was over I rushed to her side. My friend, our teacher and I sat next to her and quietly calmed her down. After she was calmed down enough to move, our teacher told us to go and sit in the counselor's office to calm down more. We sat down in the darkened room with just us. We were all terrified but my friend most of all. Her little sister was in one of the most unprotected parts of the school and she was panicking about her. Students shouldn't have to fear for their safety while getting an education. We shouldn't have to think about what would happen if one of the students got too fed up and had access to a gun. We should be focusing on our times tables and finding x, not knowing if we will see our families again,

In America gun violence is one of the leading causes of death among children. Every day it seems that there is another mass shooting on the news. Some days there are even two or three. One of the saddest things about this is the fact that there are so many mass shootings that the victims all start to blur together, and we don't give each person the recognition they deserve. They are real people, not just numbers on a screen, not just statistics. They all had hopes and fears and loves and dreams, but too often they are reduced to one more data point in the set. It feels so much worse when the shooter is a kid too. I read the news article about the six year old who brought a gun to school and shot his teacher. Children of any age, especially that young, shouldn't have access to weapons. Sometimes with gun violence it comes

down to if the kid has access to weapons. Sometimes with gun violence it comes down to if the kid has access to weapons. A six year old can't shoot his teacher without a gun. In America there are more guns than people, and that needs to change. I can help reduce gun violence by protesting, and going to anti-gun violence rallies. This is a big issue that I, as a middle schooler, cannot fix by myself. We need to band together to make change in our world. Go to rallies and write to your senator. I can't do this by myself. We can do this if we work together.

Youth violence is a huge problem and we can't fix it alone. If we all work together to give more support to its victims and help enact policy change, we can stop this cycle of violence.

**Carter Neilson – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**West Jordan Middle School – Teacher, Scott Tippetts**



Beginnings

Violence is a problem. It can change the path of someone's life and if you endure violence as a kid, your morale and self-esteem can be impacted greatly. Trauma can occur and turn you into a fortress of sorrow and depression. Some people can't get better. We need to find out the ways and why violence occurs and stop it dead in its tracks.

There are several kinds of violence. There's emotional violence, where people will insult you or try to make you feel bad on purpose, psychological violence where violence will affect your psyche, and physical violence, where they will try to hurt you physically. We know where they end, but the most important part is where it all starts. We need to focus on the beginnings.

One of the most common reasons for Youth Violence is bullying. Bullies are always trying to find some way to ruin peoples' days. Bullies will target vulnerable people and will pick on them every day, usually physically, hit them, hurt them, push them. The vulnerable people will dread going to

Essay #R\_2sTmJhoHEVqyDcm  
school every day, and if that continues, it's only a matter of time until the pain is too great and the victim will be suicidal or become a bully. This is why bullying spreads as if it's a viral disease.

Another reason violence occurs is generational issues. In the video, "La Escalera del Violencia", it shows that violence and abuse can pass down and spread very easily. An abusive spouse could have been abused, so then they abuse their spouse and make them abusive, so then they abuse their kid, and then their kid has anger and he thinks that hurting people is okay, then the kid grows up, gets a spouse and the cycle of brutal horror continues. It gets even worse if abusive parents have multiple kids, then more kids will turn violent. This huge chain reaction has a smaller beginning but grows and spreads until the problem gets ten times worse. Anger is one more way that violence spreads. It's simply a buildup and you are a glass that's about to overflow. If there are too many things in your life that go wrong and you can't take it well, anger occurs. As a matter of fact, anger is inevitable in life. It's plain and simple. We're humans. We can't brush anger off as if it's nothing. It stays for a while and sometimes we lash out at other people to get rid of it. Anger can occur from many things, such as death of a relative, being mad with someone, or the causes of violence I have talked about.

My personal experience with violence was when I played football a couple years ago. One of my better friends on the team tackled the other teams' player, and then the kid who got tackled started punching my friend in the stomach. Luckily and surprisingly, it didn't hurt him badly. I remember witnessing it and I remember feeling very mad and confused. I guess I'm lucky that he wasn't hurt. Some people can seriously mess someone up and injure someone if they land the right hits. The worse it hurts, the harder it is to cope with it. No one wants to see their kid, relative or friend get hurt. Since the one who threw punches got ejected, my friend was okay, and I was young and naive, I guess it was easier to cope with it because I didn't

know how truly messed up it was at the time. Now that I've learned more, though, it also makes it easier to understand in a sense. I've realized it ties in very easily to the causes of violence I have discussed. This kid most certainly could have had issues at home with his parents so he doesn't see the wrong in punching someone whenever he wants. He could have bullies at school that he runs into every day or just a bunch of anger building up inside of him that he needs to let out but that doesn't mean that it's okay. We need to stop violence. It's always going to be a problem in society, but even if we can help as much as one person get out of it and recover from it, it makes a difference. But stopping it on a larger scale starts, again, with a small beginning.

What can I, as a person do to stop violence? I can help people who are going through it when I see people suffering from it. I can push helping to stop violence out into the world and persuade other people to help. Teens who are about to initiate violence can stop and truly think before they do something, "Do I really want to do this?" "Is it worth it?" "Do I really want people to suffer?" If we stop and genuinely think before we do something, violence can drastically decrease. Teens can also show kindness in school to sad and angry people. You never know how as much as a smile or kind word can make someone's day. As a community, we can help support those who are angry or showing signs of violence. Invite them to activities, help them get involved. Make them feel welcome. Make them feel like they are a part of something. At school we can help people cope with violence by talking with students and helping them stay safe and stop it from happening by making sure students aren't creating a hostile environment and spreading bad vibes to other people.

Violence can be stopped but it's not going to be easy. If we are steadfast and try our hardest, we can help a lot of people. Which is why I invite you to help people that you know are struggling. You can help begin the end of violence. In a dark world of violence, there is a light. That light is us.

Charlotte Smith – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Dommer



People

People.

The beings that roam the earth like they own it,  
Like they were here before anything else,  
But they weren't.

People.

Streets are slowly getting owned by the homeless,  
People ignore them because they are selfish or afraid of getting played.  
Millionaires and billionaires are talked about all over the media,  
Probably because they own the media.  
There are roughly 47 million millionaires and 2% of the world's population homeless,  
And America has nearly 40% of those millionaires and 600,000 homeless people.  
Why are these people out on the streets instead of in homeless shelters?  
Millionaires have the money to do so, so why not do it?

People.

Men commit suicide about 3.5 times more than women.  
Although women have a higher depression and attempted suicide rate,  
Men take their idea of killing themselves very seriously,  
Creating more complicated, and effective, ways to end their lives than women.  
Why?  
For generations, people have been telling their kids how to act by saying  
"Boys don't cry,"  
Or talking to their daughters that they are prone to be more emotional than men.  
Women tend to follow how they are feeling more than men,  
Because they were taught that is it "unacceptable;"  
They are forced by society to keep their mouths shut about themselves.  
They are human too.  
Weakness isn't a threat.  
If women can speak about their feelings, why is it shameful for men to do the same?

People.

"Go make me a sandwich."  
"Go do the dishes."  
"Go clean the house."  
Some women hear that on a daily basis.  
They may hear that from controlling husbands.  
They may hear that from controlling boyfriends.  
If the men can be the breadwinner all day long,  
So can the women.  
If the women can stay at home and take care of the people and things inside it,  
So can the men.

People.

The beings that roam the earth like they own it,  
Like they were here before anything else,  
Utah State Board of Education's Prevention and Student Services

But they aren't.

People.

They don't realize that their friend is hurting.

They don't realize that someone they do is planning to die.

They don't realize that people have it much worse.

They don't realize that people are doing the things that others want them to do,  
And not what they want to do.

They don't realize what others are going through.

People.

They either care about themselves or others,

Hardly inbetween.

They care about money.

They care about their wants,

Not others' needs.

They care about their reputation.

They care about their appearance.

Those selfish beings.

What have they become?

What have we become?

Claire Sylvia – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy – Teacher, Debra Kim Arminen



Light

Based on a true story, my story.

A harsh, inclement evening  
One doctors appointment  
Alone in a room with a man,  
One who would be the cause of one's youth violence.  
Father running late,  
"It's only a med check."  
That's the only thought in my pounding head

"Thought about self-harm?"

"No."

Lies.

"Thought about suicide?"

"No."

More.

"Anything to talk about?"

I flipped the switch,  
out came the light.

My insecurities, my flaws.

Secrets, the things I hate about myself,

They all came out in a moment of anxiety.

"I don't eat sometimes, guilt overtakes,"

Something I have been feeling more recently.

"I hate my height, my weight disgusts me,"

Something I've been insecure about awhile now.

The next words that fell one by one

Out of his mouth

Would be the climax of this story.

"I don't care about that,

Today is mainly about how you are feeling,

And to be completely honest,

You are overweight,

You need to grow.

That's a fact, not an opinion".

He speaks blurred words,

Hiding though my held back tears.

All I caught was

I couldn't eat as much,

If were to eat at all, I would get only

Healthy options.

Flushed cheeks,

The trust I've been building

For years on end

Is gone.

"I'm sorry."

Don't know why I was the one to apologize.  
"Forgiveness is my strength," he said.  
Kindness was not.

My dad shows up,  
Half an hour.  
I tell him I want to go,  
He wanted updates from the doctor first.  
I told him I would tell him about it,  
But truth is all I wanted to do was leave  
That stupid doctor's office.  
So we went,  
The light switched off,  
But it felt like the lightbulb had shattered completely.

"How was it when I was gone?"  
"Great!"  
The lies would not stop spilling,  
The guilt would not stop coming.  
Neither did the pain.

Puking: weight loss.  
Not eating: weight loss  
My fingers kept typing on the computer,  
They had a mind of their own.  
I tell myself to stop eating,  
I try, but I can't.  
My relationship with food,  
An obsessive one.  
Anger at myself, the doctor.

Third time's a charm.  
Blood.  
Skin.  
Tears.  
Blood, much blood.  
I don't know how to hide this.

That doctor smashed that lightbulb,  
No clue how that light will ever flow again.  
And I have only a small idea  
how I will gain that love back,  
For myself.  
The effects of his words were distressing.  
And about it, I can attempt to love myself,  
Be kinder to everyone I see,  
Nobody knows if they have experienced  
Youth violence.  
And lastly,  
Gain my trust back.  
Let my light flow again.

Dee Kaedence Jacketta – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Thomas Jefferson Junior High School – Teacher, Marissa Neeley



### Preventing Youth Violence

Youth violence has affected my life in more ways than one. One way it has affected me is that it has affected my friends who have suffered from youth violence at their home and at school, which ultimately affects me too. Violence is behavior that is intended to harm or hurt somebody mentally or physically, some causes of youth violence are things like bad adult role models or bad environments in your community. I can be nice and not bully people to stop youth violence at my school.

This is a solution to youth violence because the nicer I am to people the nicer they are to other people. This is something I can do because it is something I can control. If everyone does what they can do and what they can control to just help a little, all the little things will add up and help prevent youth violence.

A study done by the World Health Organization found that some risk factors of youth violence can be access and misuse of alcohol, drugs, and firearms. This shows that if everyone does their part to keep these things away from children a little effort will go a long way in preventing youth violence. (World Health Organization)

Some people may argue that just being nice and not bullying is not an effective solution to youth violence. People may also say that youth violence is too big of a problem to solve and prevent. While this may not prevent all youth violence situations it is something I can do to prevent youth violence around me as much as I can. And If everyone just does a little to help prevent youth violence there will be a lot less violence in the world.

The CDC discovered in a study that some ways to prevent youth violence are to promote family environments that support healthy development, connect youth to caring adults and activities, and intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk. These all are things that a person could do to help prevent youth violence, so if everyone does their part and just helps a little it would go a long way in preventing youth violence. (Center for Disease Control 2)

That is why being nice and not bullying is what I can do to prevent youth violence at my school, and even though I can not fix every situation of youth violence, it is what I can do and control. If everybody does their little part in preventing youth violence it would go a long way in getting rid of youth violence.

### Works Cited

Center for Disease Control. "preventing youth violence." *preventing youth violence*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2021, p. 2. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv/YV-factsheet.pdf>. Accessed 5th January 2023.

World Health Organization. "Youth violence." *World Health Organization (WHO)*, 8 June 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence>. Accessed 5 January 2023.

Evelyn Palomarez – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High School – Teacher, Dustin Flores



What is youth violence?

Youth Violence is a part of your brain, soul, heart, and thoughts, Even your body has negative thoughts or actions. Sometimes to the point, you're maybe fighting with yourself, or you hurt others. I Remember I was feeling low self-esteem, And my brother accidentally spilled a cup of water on the table. I had my homework out and it got the little corner of my paper wet. I looked up at him and started yelling at him telling him to be more careful, Why Would you do that? You're so clumsy, and grabbed my stuff and went upstairs. Not too long after I was upset with myself and my behavior because it wasn't a big deal it would dry. I was angry because I didn't know how to feel I was already off on a bad day, and it just made me more mad. Sometimes when you're mad there is some type of feeling you have or emotion and that emotion may not be shown all the time. That is the only emotion you have until you remind yourself who you are and that hurting others doesn't help your hurt, it just makes things worse. I mean getting your way every time doesn't help or fix anything saying sorry doesn't fix the damage that you made. Whatever you do, whether it's tripping them in the halls, hitting them, or making fun of them in any way, shape, And form, it's not gonna help. You can change but there needs to be the part of you that wants to who can calm down your emotions. Some form of youth violence has happened in every school, doesn't mean it's ok or the right thing to do.

What are some causes of youth violence?

I think that the main problem with self and youth violence is others telling you something so much to the point they can't take it so they take it out on others. And most of the time those hurtful words that others tell someone or call them, They will try and define themselves by that word. You might be the yellow fish in a pound of a thousand brown fish, but because others will say you're different, or you look a certain way, doesn't mean you are any different from me or anyone else. You are you and that's what matters, not something someone else said you are. Youth violence has caused so many people to change the way they act, and the way they dress, But tell me why it's such a big deal to just be you. If there are things about you that other people don't like, who cares it's who you are and who you are is special and important just as anyone else. Why? Is there youth violence? Why? Don't people stand up for not just themselves but other people? When I see other fights on video, I sit there and wonder why people think that fighting or bullying is gonna help all it does is make things worse. I sometimes start to wonder if this person didn't do this would it have been different? Maybe, yes, probably but, Why wonder when you know violence isn't the answer? How has youth violence affected my life?

One way that youth violence has affected my life is, this past week My friend was involved directly with youth violence at my school. They were injured and hospitalized. After the situation, I heard from my friends at school the next day and saw the video all over social media. After watching the video I was lost for words, I had never seen anything as brutal and traumatizing as that. My thought that whole day was WHY? Was it because they were different then others or was it just because they felt like picking on someone, targeting them? I am not sure if that made them feel better, or the same. It made me disgusted! I saw people just standing there in the video not doing anything and that was just as awful, that kids and friends were just watching this happen and standing back or just worried about recording it.

How Can I Stop Youth Violence

To stop youth violence, I can make sure when I see or hear something I say something, and I can stand up for those who maybe don't have the courage to or are afraid. My dad always told me " To not only stand up for myself but others". When you see that one kid who always seems like there having a bad day, go up to them and try and see what you can maybe help with whether that's walking with them to class, sitting with them at lunch, hanging out with them during class, Anything even if it's small can make a big difference in someone's life. There's one thing that I will always remember and that is that bringing people

down doesn't lift you up. I see youth violence every day in school. As you walk through the halls you can hear people whispering, the glances, the judgment looks, the gossip. I never knew what bullying was. I thought it was just kids being mean to other kids. But it's a lot more than that. I never thought it was a big deal because it never happened to me so I never cared about it. But I realized it's so much more important than just bullying. When you bully someone it's not just hurting you it hurts other people, It could be hurting their family, their friends, you don't know and just standing there and doing nothing, is being a coward. Why watch someone get beat up, instead? I know a whole community is bigger than just one person fighting another standing together. Make your voice heard.

Gavin Wallenberg – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High School – Teacher, Maria Georgiou



**The Darkness is not Bright**

Darkness.  
It feels like nobody cares.  
Everything is going wrong  
It is like an earthquake that rattles the earth.  
I can see the evil in their eyes.  
They hate me.  
I'm hopeless.  
My Self Esteem has gone down like the earth is crumbling.  
People are laughing.  
I am Crying.  
I feel like I am dying.  
Everything has gone black and white,  
Like a sad movie.  
Loneliness.  
Today was going great until this happened.  
I feel like a baby lying on the, sand crying, not being able to get up,  
Because of the one negative wave that crashed into me.  
Still more darkness...

I hear a voice,  
A voice that is yelling.  
I look up,  
A kid, Standing up for me.  
The Bully Runs off.  
Silence, Like everyone just died  
He walks up to me,  
Asks me if I am ok,  
I feel light,  
I am happy.  
All I needed,  
Was some courage.  
To enlighten my day again.  
I see colors again,  
As bright as the sun,  
Today,  
I made a friend.  
A friend that I can trust,  
That gave me courage.  
And now.  
Whenever I see someone all sad and droopy,  
Because one person ruined their day,  
I give them courage.  
Courage to stand up and keep going.  
To forget about yesterday.  
To be happy about today.  
And to stand up for others tomorrow.

So how does Youth Violence affect my daily life? It affects me a lot. I have kids all around me that just want to kill themselves, and people do nothing about it, Except for me, and others that are like me. I am part of hope squad, I give people hope, to continue going, to have a good day, a happy day. People at my school get bullied a lot, it brings them down, and they just want to kill themselves. I have a friend that was like that. For her, It was like the ground was crumbling under her. She had no friends, no one to stand up for her, until I met her. I make sure that she does not get bullied, I make sure no one gets bullied, to make our future brighter.

What is youth violence?

Youth violence is a lot of stuff. Youth violence is where the youth do things, like be violent. Youth violence is bullying, or just suicide.

Two of the main causes in my community is because something is going on in that persons life, so they put it on other people, by bullying them then the person they are bullying, wants to kill themselves, or the bullyer, goes straight to suicide. Those are the 2 most common things that happen. But also, Smoking and Vaping are some causes too, because smoking and vaping helps them forget about what is happening, but then you get addicted and you can damage your lungs.

In the website "World Health Organization" It Says, Every Year, Over 200,000 Deaths Happen Because of Youth Violence. It is the Fourth Leading Cause of Death. About 84% Of Youth That Kill themselves are Males, The rest are females. For Every person that was killed by youth violence, More people had injuries because of youth violence and were hospitalized, From Knives, to even just Fists. There was also a study involving 40 Countries. It Showed that 42% of boys and 37% of girls were exposed to bullying.

The CDC says that Thousands of people experience Youth violence every day. Youth Violence can Negatively impact anyone, anywhere. Over 1,000 Youth Experience injuries from youth violence every day. There can be consequences with youth violence. It can be harmful to them and their physical, mental, or social health.

Some things that I can do in my community to help stop youth violence are, Being on hope squad, Its our job to make sure people do not commit suicide. We want people to grow, and be happy. Another thing is stand up for the person getting bullied, it can brighten their day and help them to not commit suicide, or anything else. If you do not feel comfortable with standing up for them, then tell an adult that you trust. In my school we have something that is up on the walls everywhere. See something? Say something. We have that to help stop bullies, so that people can be happy. So if you ever see anyone that needs help and may be getting bullied, Help them, There is a lot of people in this world, that will see someone struggling, but won't help them, so be that person that does help them, that guides them through their life, and whenever they need help, they can look up at you. That is my one goal for you to do sometime, just help someone with something.

Hazel Jonas – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Canyons Online Middle School – Teacher, Mariah Higgins



## Do the Write Thing Essay Contest 2022

Youth violence is when kids or teenagers bully each other to the point where it hurts, from mean words to physical violence. Youth violence can happen anywhere, from your neighborhood, to your school, to hangout places like parks. I have experienced youth violence, but not from another person – from myself. I have a scar just below my left wrist, and although it's healing up, it's definitely visible. It's from when I get in trouble, when I don't think I'm worth it or good enough, or when one of my friends is sad, bullied, etc. I would scratch the skin raw, then put hand sanitizer in the scrape to make it burn. This continued for a while until the scar was noticed by my parents. I still do it sometimes when I feel depressed or when someone I care for is depressed. Youth violence can leave marks on a person's life forever, and there are certain factors that come into play to make youth violence happen.

Youth violence can change peoples' lives, people have lost others they cared for, and even their own lives. Newsela Staff wrote an article called "CHILL: Using brain science to teach Chicago teens how to stop violence" that says: "Lauryn Hill's high school years have been full of heartbreak. One of her friends in Chicago was shot 22 times. Another died after someone sprayed bullets into a gathering held to honor the first victim." This is one very sad example of what happens when youth resort to using violence. This can happen for many reasons, including things that should never have ended in violence. This could happen to anyone, and have an impact on lives for generations.

Popularity counts. Where you are on the social ladder is a factor in youth violence, and some people may be surprised that if you are more popular, you could be a target. According to the article, "In school, popular kids get bullied just like the outcasts" it states: "The ways in which status can increase risk have been largely ignored and we identify a new pattern of victimization. Evidence suggests that aggressors' campaigns of harassment and abuse are rewarded with increased prestige ...particularly when they target socially prominent rivals." This means that aggressors think if they zero in on people who are popular and "win," they can become more popular. Unfortunately, this strategy usually succeeds. If this keeps going, it could become an even larger problem. Other people might think "maybe it will work for me too." Instead of countering youth violence, some people may use this strategy to become more popular.

There are also other reasons, such as gender and race. In the "CHILL" article by newsela, stated earlier, it notes: "In the group studied, about half the students were white and a third were black. Most lived with two parents. Girls had higher rates of victimization. The researchers noted that there could be differences in other populations." This means that what you look like, what your gender is, and who your family is or what your parent situation is could possibly heighten or lessen the chance of being involved in youth violence. Although gender, race, etc. should in no way matter, they might factor in when talking about youth violence. Youth violence can be affected by popularity and self-esteem. Gender, race, family, etc. can also factor in with who gets involved with youth violence.

One thing we can do to solve this problem is being sympathetic and observant. We can look out for each other. If someone seems or feels overlooked or not cared for, we can help them. We can show love, and teach people about youth violence so they are aware of it. The more people are aware of youth violence, the better chance we have to help stop it.

Youth violence is a big problem in our world, though some don't see it as such. It has to stop, otherwise it could get worse and worse until no one knows what to do and everyone is a victim. Youth violence has ended in people losing lives, loved ones, and even health. You can help stop youth violence. Try to be kinder, more observant, and more caring to friends and even kids you don't know. A smile can be an invitation to talk. If you see any kind of youth violence, get help from an adult. We can educate people on youth violence and how to help stop it. We can be the change, if we try our hardest, so try your hardest!

**Giovani Cruz Agustin – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Valley Junior High School – Teacher, DeMarie Hoover**



Have you ever thought about what the real meaning of Youth Violence is? The people you love will not understand the meaning, but they might've experienced it. 84% of Youth Violence victims were mostly males. In 1980, 475,160 arrests happened by ages under 18 and over 24. 78% from 1994 to the mid-2000s, they had a lot of arrests caused by Youth Violence. I am going to write about what youth violence is and what causes it, how it has affected my life, and how to prevent it. Youth violence affects thousands of people all over the world, it has affected my life, and there are many ways to prevent it.

For me, I think about Youth Violence and what causes it. Youth Violence is family abuse, bullying, self-abuse, physical fighting. Some Social Media apps are a big part of it too, it's cyberbullying and self-abuse. For example, When someone talks to you online and wants to meet you in person at a specific address and you go at a specific time when you meet them they will just talk to you and they could possibly hit you or stab or throw things at you when no one notices they will possibly leave your body on the ground. The person might use his/her own emotion and use it against you. A family member can also hurt you and think that you can trust them but one day that person might hurt you. You will get scared and will not feel safe around them anymore. Youth violence affects thousands of people's lives, 12 young people are victims and they get hurt or are sent to the hospital, all around the world that happens each day.

Youth violence affected me in the past two years, and it changed me a lot. I still think about the things that happened. I get scared just thinking about it happening again. My Family was also hurt and it changed them a lot too. One of my friends' is going thru somethings and that she is trying to commit suicide and trying to harm herself. She tells me that her family doesn't need her and that she doesn't get the attention she needs. I give her all the attention when I call her or text her because I want her to be happy and be like her old self. I know a lot of people that were dealt with by Youth violence. A lot of people from schools also get hurt most from fights or people making up fake rumors about the person they hate.

All around the world people have been trying to stop Youth violence and people hurting younger kids. Families can teach their little kids about Youth violence at a young age. Talking with teenagers and knowing what they are feeling and telling them to make healthy choices. Communities can help families or other people by knowing what they have been thrown at and knowing what can help them. Schools can have a therapy class and help kids with their emotions, making them feel safe. Schools can also promote Youth violence and show ways students can stop it.

In conclusion, Youth violence, is Family abuse, cyberbullying, physical fighting, etc... A lot of people have dealt with Youth Violence even all around the world and many people get hurt or die. Families can help their communities or their children and teach them to make healthy choices. A lot of people will help you like your teachers or your trusted parents. Schools could add classes that will help you avoid negative energy from other kids.

Isabella Parker – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen



### Do the Write Thing Challenge

A funny joke, a mean nickname, or a small little rumor is all it is to you. But to the person being bullied, it is so much more. Youth violence has become a problem in many schools, neighborhoods, and other public places across the world. Youth violence can take many forms such as unkind language, and physical fighting. Many teens suffer every day from youth violence, and many cause it on purpose, or by accident.

Youth violence has affected my life in many different ways. Although I have never been a direct victim of youth violence or tried to cause it, I have witnessed it several times. Most of these times have been at school, and have been in the form of unkind words. I have witnessed many people saying horrible things about other people directly to them, and even behind their backs. This makes me feel very uncomfortable, and I often feel sad after I see or hear these things.

Youth violence can be caused by many different things. One of the biggest causes of youth violence is mental health disorders like depression and anxiety. Also, youth violence can be caused by someone experiencing trauma, or peer pressure. According to Polaris Teen Center, "Approximately 1 in 5 teens (ages 12-18) suffer from at least 1 mental health disorder." Many teens struggle with mental illness, and receive no support that they need. I think that if there were more easily accessible and free services to help teens with their mental health struggles, youth violence could become less common. These support systems could be as simple as incorporating mental health awareness lessons into school classes, or having schools provide easy access therapy sessions. Also, another huge cause of youth violence is an abusive home, or lack of parental leadership. I think it would also help to make support services easily available to parents and other adults who are struggling.

Youth violence is very hard to avoid altogether, but there are many simple things we can do to stop it, or even prevent it from happening. The biggest thing that you can do to stop youth violence is very easy and simple: be kind to everyone. Kindness can help make many people's days and even lives better. Also, if you are witnessing youth violence, tell a trusted adult, like a teacher, parent, or other guardian. These adults will most likely be able to stop it from getting worse. If you are worried about someone's mental health, try to help them get support, and tell a trusted adult.

In conclusion, youth violence is a very widespread and scary problem, but there are ways we can prevent it from happening. I believe that if everyone is aware of youth violence, what causes it, and knows about ways it can be stopped, the middle school world can become much kinder, and a more comfortable environment for everyone.

**Jackson Neff – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Summit Academy Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen**



Youth Violence

I haven't really experienced any youth violence or fights. I do get a little made fun of my height, but with my friends we like to tease each other and mess around. I know it's just a joke, but if you say something rude as a joke to someone that takes it seriously, it might not turn out too well. It can also cause a lot of unnecessary drama and could ruin your future relationship with them. Making someone feel a way that they're getting bullied or made fun of, can cause them to have a lot of different side effects. For example anxiety, depression, suicide, and other stress related conditions.

Most causes of youth violence are from media influence, communities and neighborhood, insufficient parental supervision, peer pressure, drug and alcohol use, traumatic events, and mental illness. I hope that people in the future that are thinking about death or need any help know there are a lot of people that will help them or and someone to help them. If you see anyone that feels down or just acting differently, you should go and talk to them and there shouldn't be anything wrong with just talking to them. And maybe if they need help, you can help them and a therapist or any help you can. I do hope that everyone knows that they can make a difference.

Jazleen Echeveste – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Valley Junior High School – Teacher, DeMarie Hoover



### Youth Violence

Based on the 2020 U.S. Census, the estimated Latino population in the United States is 18.9% and a large number of them have been affected by youth violence. History indicates that youth gangs are more common in low-income communities. Cultural backgrounds also influence how violent someone can be. Unsupervised teens tend to make bad choices. In this essay I am going to explain the causes of youth violence in my Latino community, how it has affected my life, and what I can do to help prevent it from happening.

Youth Violence is a significant problem in the U.S. and many things can cause it. It can be caused by cultural backgrounds, low-income communities, and when youth are left unsupervised. According to an article by M A Straus and C Smith when 721 Hispanic families and 4,052 non-Hispanic families were analyzed “The violence rate in Hispanic families was much greater than the rate in non-Hispanic white families” (1988). Violence in Latino families is most likely caused by their cultural backgrounds because many Hispanic kids are raised seeing violence in their own household or experiencing it. Another reason youth violence is such a big problem is because parents have to leave their kids unsupervised for long periods of time to work extremely long hours to provide for the family. Many Latino parents have to work extremely long hours to give their children most basic necessities which means teens are unsupervised for many of those hours. Because teens have no one to watch over them, their solution may be to “have fun” when really they are getting themselves into trouble. Youth gangs are mostly in low-income communities which is where many Latino teens tend to grow up and join them to “make friends”.

Things like youth violence happen almost everywhere. Although I fortunately have not yet experienced youth violence my peers at school and my family have. At school physical fighting is a problem that happens somewhat often. Many of my peers at school have or do self-harm and I have been in a couple of situations where people I care about have told me about harming themselves. Doing so hurts me as well as puts me in a tough position having to report it and risking how it could affect my relationship with that person. My family, along with many other Latino families, are raised to believe that violence is a good punishment for bad behavior. For example, some of my family members have experienced family abuse first hand as a form of discipline. These actions have a long term effect and are passed on from generation to generation.

Although I cannot stop youth violence by myself there are ways I can try and help. As a teen, I can help prevent youth violence by encouraging my peers to join clubs at school or outside of it. I can also help others make goals by talking about the future to them. Another way is reporting anything before it happens. Encouraging my peers to join clubs and play sports can help if they have no parental supervision when they get home. It can help avoid joining youth gangs by keeping them busy and doing things they enjoy. When I am talking to others I can talk about goals they want to accomplish in their future to encourage them to do good. I can ask them about their progress with their goal every once in a while as well. Reporting things like physical fighting at school and self-harm before it happens can help prevent major problems. Doing these things can only help, but doing anything is better than nothing.

In conclusion, youth violence has been part of the past, present, and will continue to be in our future. It affects minorities, like the Latino community, mentally and physically. As a student I can help in school and out of school by trying to be a role model. I can continue educating myself and others to break the cycle of youth violence. This will benefit my peers, family, and myself as part of the Latino community. I hope this information can be used to help prevent youth violence and promote resources to families that may need it. Any little grain of salt can make a big impact.

Kenley Orton – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Sand Ridge Junior High School – Teacher, Amy Kendell



### Youth Violence

It's the thing that you are always warned about. The thing you are told to stay away from.  
Except you can't get away from it.  
It's always sneaking around the shadows of your life, waiting for the best moment to jump out at you.  
Waiting to pull you in.  
And once it does, you often get in trouble. Trouble.  
The one thing you don't need. But that's it.  
Things.  
It's described as things.  
Whether it is something, or nothing, it is still a thing. Something you can simply toss and throw away.  
But if only it was that easy.  
When you try to get it out of your life, it sticks.  
It sticks to anything and everything it can grab onto.  
The hardest thing is that when it grabs onto something, it often ruins it. Ruins relationships.  
Ruins plans.  
Ruins lives.  
The cause of the violence runs deep. But it is not part of you.  
It is a parasite, latching on and sucking out everything that makes you you.  
Violence is caused by many things. Things hard, or impossible to avoid. Violence is born of ruin.  
Born of ashes, but not like the lively phoenix. More like a worm.  
Digging deeper.  
Ever so deep.  
It marbles pink and red into your life.  
It burrows into everything you have, until it's nearly impossible to find where it first started.  
But if you want to get rid of it, you have to find where it begins.  
It is often born of a rotting relationship, or from a misleading friend. To be rid of it, you want to do the opposite of what caused it.  
If it was caused by taking, then give. If it was caused by doubt, then trust.  
If you do whatever causes it, you are only becoming a more suitable host for it.  
Don't be a host.  
Get rid of it.  
Get rid of the violence affecting our lives. Get rid of violence.

Leah Sabin – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Lehi Junior High School – Teacher, Chance Carter



I stare at my screen  
Struggling to form the words I'm supposed to The ones I  
need to.  
I feel all of it, all the stress, the anger.  
I feel it when I hide, scared of what I might do next  
I feel it when I yell, screaming for help in my own twisted way.  
I feel it when I keep it inside, every inch of me trying to not let go. Who can I tell  
anyway? No one ever listens.  
It inches closer, its filthy mouth, covered in a silent smirk. No one takes  
the time to ask what's making me sad, They only ever tell me it's okay,  
*justifying themselves.*  
I think about the feelings of others. Is it really just  
me?  
Its smile pushes upwards, amused by my words. Are they mad  
on purpose, or do they need help? Do I tell them it's okay?  
Do I not listen?  
I keep to myself, Because I don't want to hurt others. But is that the  
very thing I'm doing?  
Do I need to be vulnerable? Do I need to be  
weak?  
Pleased by my thoughts, it crawls towards me, wanting more. Do I need to let  
them hurt me twice?  
I can't let these feelings get in the way.  
Its smile fades as my words echo in my head. I turn around.  
I have better things to focus on. I can't keep  
sabotaging myself.  
I didn't notice it creeping up behind me. It's sickening  
figure burning into my head. I need help, not comfort.  
I need someone to understand, empathy is merely pretend. "Your over  
reacting"  
It whispers, taking over my brain.  
The words cycle through my mind, over and over. "It's just an  
excuse, so you can keep being lazy" My cheeks start to feel hot,  
my face is red.  
I feel a wet tear run down my face, one of many.  
"Crying because you realized everything you've wasted?" "Everyone you've hurt?" I  
can feel it eyes watching me.  
*It wants to hurt me.*  
I try to push it out but the damage is done. It's already  
inside.  
"Your worthless" "Selfish"  
"Just be quiet, No one listens because you don't need help, You just want  
attention"  
I can't take it anymore, I turn around and look at my hideous monster. I recognize  
those eyes.  
No  
I turn around, not wanting to look at it.

The monster that is myself, burying me in my own self-hatred.

I never really understood the prominence of youth violence in my life until I really started to think about it during my day to day life. I have never really been bullied or abused, so when I learned about this challenge I didn't feel inspired or connected to it. But I am glad that I read through the themes because even though I haven't felt violence from others, I realized that I can also feel violence from myself. I think a lot of times we brush stuff like this off, because it is so common, and no one really seems to have a solution. I mean, of course I've been told I'm fine the way I am, and that I don't need to change, But I am also subjected to so many resources to change the way I look and am perceived, that it's almost contradictory.

I think youth violence is caused by so many things that most people don't even notice, or they just choose to ignore. From a young age we are taught about bullying and abuse and why it is wrong, but as a society we fail to talk about the attacker that is ourselves. And I think this underlying issue is what causes so many cognitive distortions or "self-doubts" in children and young teenagers today. This is a habit that starts very early on in children's development, and can often change the way they perceive themselves. I think the media plays a very significant role in this issue because it opens a world of solutions for unnecessary things that young children didn't even know were problems.

It is hard to face the truth that is youth violence, but I believe that we can make a change. I love the idea of this challenge because it gives the resources for youth to make a difference. Even if you can't change anything outside of your community, I promise it adds up. Maybe it starts by recognizing your talents instead of your weak points. Or maybe it's loving something about yourself that was hard before. Everyone starts somewhere, and I want to start now, by giving kids my age the strength to love themselves through my writing.

Lisa Taffese – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Thomas Jefferson Junior High School – Teacher, Marissa Neeley



Dealing With Youth Violence

Youth violence is an immense problem that many of us have to face or encounter. I have even witnessed an act of youth violence and it had a major effect on what I thought about youth violence. Youth violence means a person or a group of people inflicting any type of harm upon a person or group of people. One thing that I can do to help lower the severity of youth violence is report it to a trusted adult.

The World Health Organization states, “One in eight young people report sexual abuse.” Chances are, if we encourage more people to report anything that ever happens to them or anything they might witness to a trusted adult that can prevent it from happening again, we could easily start limiting acts of youth violence in our everyday lives.

For instance, not too long ago I witnessed an act of youth violence right after school as I was walking to my mom’s car. As I was walking by a church I noticed a group of kids circled around a girl about my age. Then the group of kids started to continuously hit, kick, and punch this girl while a few of them were filming videos. I knew that if I tried to stop them on my own, I would probably get hurt too since I was greatly outnumbered, so instead I went to my mom and explained the situation, which then followed with her calling the police. The police arrived quickly since there was an officer at the school, solved the problem at hand and tried to comfort the girl. What this experience shows is that by reporting what I saw to my mom, who then further reported it to the police, it ended up preventing the situation from escalating any further.

One might argue that there are better ways to deal with youth violence, such as dealing with the issue directly by yourself. For example, standing up for your friend when someone is bullying them verbally. Another example might be, telling someone that is teasing you to stop.

It may be true that you should deal with the smaller instances of youth violence on your own. However, when it comes to the more severe problems of youth violence, you should always report anything that you might experience or witness to a trusted adult so they can prevent it from repeating. For example, one thing that you should report to a trusted adult is a fight that happened or is happening.

Looking back on my experience with youth violence, you can see that because I reported what I saw to my mom, she called the police who helped prevent the situation from escalating. According to [youth.gov](https://youth.gov), “1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property in the past year.” If we persuaded all students to report any bullying, we could possibly eliminate almost all bullying.

In conclusion, all youth should report any relatively severe youth violence that they might experience or witness to a trusted adult that can prevent it from happening again. If we can accomplish this, then we can ultimately put an end to almost all youth violence in our everyday lives.

Works Cited

“Federal Data.” Youth.gov, <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention/federal-data>.

Accessed 8 January 2023.

“Youth violence.” World Health Organization (WHO), 8 June 2020,

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence>. Accessed 8 January 2023.

London Young – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy-Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace



Youth Violence Is Not Write

This story is based on true events. When I was younger, I had to grow up fast and get used to change. My mom was a single mother who was working full time in a hospital, while I would spend some days at my grandparents. Later she got a job in our town and was around more often, which was exciting. My mom had this one spouse who we got really close with and his family. They were serious for a long time but the relationship ended later and my second family was gone. My uncle who had kept our family close and played a big role in my life had passed away. Then my mom had been fired from her job, causing us to uproot our lives and move to Bluffdale when I was entering sixth grade, leaving our family behind. It was entirely different in the city coming from what I was used to growing up in a small town. In my first year of living here I stumbled into a toxic friend group. There were these girls that would treat me and each other horribly. They would constantly point out the other person's insecurities and try to tear each other down to make them look or feel better about themselves. They did everything in their power to ruin someone else's day or make them feel unhappy. While I was struggling with friendships at school, my mom had stumbled into depression. She had fallen into some bad habits, she started having negative emotions and sad thoughts. She was struggling with finding a job, so we lived on child support for a while. I was struggling because I felt responsible for my mom's discouragement, and I would stress about how we would financially struggle. I started to not do so well with my self confidence and my worth. I felt as if the world would be better off without me, my mom would still be with our family not having to provide for a child, I would have saved everyone a lot of trouble by simply just not being born. It was hard trying to support my mom in her mental illness and trying to figure out my own inner battles. I felt as if I was stuck. But I stayed positive through my tough times, I would count the things I was most grateful for, I would remember that my life was great compared to others. I had food, a house, clean water, and an education. I stayed optimistic, I was also lucky enough to have a friend back home and an adult to confide in. They helped me also realize that those mean girls probably had a reason for acting the way they did. And in fact, they were right. One of them had a harder life and had a parent who had a tragic death. Another had their parents' fighting and not getting along. They were insecure and sad and in pain with their own struggles at home and did not cope with it correctly, taking out their battles on other people. I realized that people have reasons for their actions. Whether it's that they don't feel as if they belong, or they are unhappy, or they are insecure. Everyone is going through something. I walk down the halls of my middle school everyday and I will see people who look down at their feet and keep walking. They feel like an outsider or as if they don't belong. They are lonely. I have made a promise to myself, whenever I can be kind or do something to make someone feel better, I will always do it. Whether it is a small thing like a compliment or telling someone that I am always here if they need a friend. I sometimes can get caught up in my own struggles, but I am working on being more aware with others and helping more people each and everyday. If I see someone being looked down on or disrespected I will step in and stop it. I want to help make the world a better place, I want to help spread awareness of youth violence and how it should not be tolerated. Everyone wants the same thing in the end, and that is to be loved, to feel like they matter, to be treated with respect and kindness. And I hope that we can make more people feel that way, to feel like they matter. I hope that someday youth violence will no longer be a big problem we have to discuss, because no one should have to go through that alone. Everyone deserves someone in their life.

**Malakai Richins – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**South Ogden Junior High School – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine**



### Free at Last

Sitting with a ghoulish blue light in my face occupying my attention and distracting me from the little hope of the world, I'm feeling the familiar cold feeling like ice against the back of my legs. I'm still sitting there with the ghoulish blue light when something pokes at my head. I disregard it as an itch. But as I start to taste the sweet cold glass of chocolate milk I see something wizz past my head. Behind me, I hear people laugh and snicker. I turn my head and they have that innocent look on their face like they did nothing. But I know different.

While I start to smell the sweetness of home like a freshly baked cake, I see another thing fly by. Again I disregard it as them messing around with each other and not them bullying me. But then time after time I hear more laughing and I start to realize that they're doing this on purpose. I start to hear words that feel like knives to me. Instantly the sweet smell of home got farther and farther away as I start to smell something sour like a lemon.

In the moment I decide to see if they'll stop if I don't react. But instead, it seems to tempt them more like a matador does a bull. But as I sit there in silence the ghoulish blue light no longer seems to be able to hold my attention. I'm now worried if anything is stuck in my hair.

Suddenly as another item wizzes past I no longer remember what the sweet cold glass of chocolate milk tastes like. All because little items were tossed at my head. I don't know what to do. I don't want to act out in anger. So I continue to sit there while the ghoulish blue light seems dimmer and less entertaining. I feel trapped. I realize that I'm not doing anything. I'm just sitting there letting them do this, not letting them know that this hurts me. But it seems that I can't bring myself to say anything in fear of them judging me and laughing if I say anything. So I continue to sit there giving no reaction until they decide to stop, or they're looking for more things to throw but can't find anything. Finally I get off the bus and start walking home. Suddenly I feel better. Being free of that situation is helping me feel better.

### What is Youth Violence?

Youth violence can be many things. It can be an abusive parent. A bully online or in person. Or they could be a friend trying to be funny. Youth violence can be anything, anywhere, or anyone. It could be anywhere. You could be causing youth violence and not even know it. You could be doing something that you thought was funny but it was actually offensive. Overall youth violence isn't just physical it can be emotional. Which then can lead to physical violence. The saying "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" is completely false. When you say mean things to people it has a big impact on them. It possibly could make them doubt themselves or it could make them say things like that to other people.

"Be sure to taste your own words before you spit them out".

- Hilary Hinton Ziglar

### What causes youth violence?

The cause of youth violence is many things. For example if a teen is playing too many video games that are violent then they can become bullies. But on the other hand if a teen plays an appropriate amount of video games and they aren't all violent then they most likely won't become bullies. Another way youth violence is caused is if a parent at home is abusive then they might think that's what a healthy relationship looks like and according to the National Bullying prevention center website 20% of teens report being bullied. Which means the other 80% don't admit to being bullied if they are. Meaning that a lot more people than we think are possible to become the new bullies and continue this endless cycle. Another way youth violence is caused is by other people bullying them then they feel either jealous or worthless so then they become the new bully. A lot of people believe that video games don't cause violence. For the most part they are correct. But if a youth gets addicted to a game and the game is a really violent one. Then it is possible that they will adapt that behavior or they won't want to stop and think that they can get what they want with violence. But in reality if they stop playing so much their lives will be so much better than before.

Abuse...  
is like a mikado blue sword  
Slicing  
through every bone in  
your body  
while the golden-yellow hope of  
your throbbing heart  
starts to diminish  
Into...  
a pile of jet black ash

### How has youth violence affected me?

As shown in my story youth violence has affected me in the way that when I'm awaiting something but then someone bullies or teases me. It can make me focused on the bad and not the good. Like when I said "Suddenly as another item wizzes past. I no longer remember what the sweet cold glass of chocolate milk tastes like". But that is not the only way it affected me it also made me feel lonely like nobody understood what it was like to be me. I have felt that feeling a lot. Like whenever I have to try to explain something to my parents about why I couldn't do something or didn't have time. It always feels like they never understand how hard it is to be a teenager at this time.

### What can I do about youth violence?

There are many things that I can do about youth violence. Sadly though it seems not many people try to do anything about youth violence. But like I have said before there are many things anyone can do. They could intervene when someone is bullying another student by going over and saying something like "Hey that's not very nice. Also how would you feel if the roles were reversed in this situation would you still do it". Sadly though for some people this doesn't work. But the majority of the time this does work to at least stop it temporarily. But this can lead into the more permanent solution. Which is sitting down, opening your heart and listening to their story and seeing why they feel the need to bully other people without judging them. But instead try to make them know that what they did is wrong but not that they are in trouble. Overall what you can do to help stop youth violence is not being judgy or punishing them for doing something wrong. But to get down on a personal level and be real with them without any judgment or anger. Simply be a friend.

Mazia Redmond-Blair – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
West Jordan Middle School – Teacher, Stacey Sawyer



### One Deep Breath

"Whoever is trying to bring you down is already below you"- Zaid K. Abdelnour. This saying is very important to me, I heard it in elementary and I have told people and have always remembered it since then. I have had so many problems with bullies. What I have learned in the past few years is that whoever is trying to hurt you isn't doing it to hurt you, they are just trying to make themselves feel better. So when that happens I take one deep breath and it truly helps.

I believe that there are ways to end youth violence. There are many fights, deaths, suicides, just from bullies and youth violence. One reason why youth violence is a big thing is because so many people are struggling so they put all their anger out on other people and that causes all the violence. Domestic violence is also really bad. Sometimes people don't realize that they are harming others and themselves, but I do believe there are so many ways that we can stop violence.

I used to go to this elementary school and they had horrible counselors and teachers in general. I was bullied like crazy. I would come home every day and just cry over and over and over again. It was almost becoming a routine. I was in the fourth grade and this new girl came along. She was basically the leader of the classes. I always thought she just wanted to hurt me because she was so mean to me. Once it was fifth grade, it was so bad, she would talk behind my back and she called me the worst names like fat a\*\*, piggy, weirdo, bi\*\*\*, and constantly she would say how annoying I was even when I wouldn't talk.

It got so bad I had to switch schools even though I had friends there that I would miss but I had to leave. She did so much more like threaten me and turn people against me, all of that stuff. Now I'm in seventh grade and I am starting to realize maybe she was jealous or just letting her anger out from other things. She still stalks me on social media and is trying to find ways to keep hurting me. I'm still so hurt inside, when I think about it I just want to cry but I have learned to just let it go and focus on the future.

That is not the only violence that has affected me personally. One day I got a call from one of my best friends. She said that one of her friends from her school killed herself. She was a 6th grader and committed suicide because of bullies.

When I heard it my heart dropped. I have witnessed people wanting to kill themselves and I hear it on the news and from my parents. Many of my parents' friends and people from their childhood have committed suicide. A lot of them were because of family problems, job problems, and divorces.

I always want to try and help people but it's so hard if they don't want to open up. I like to try to at least wave, smile, or just say hi or, "Are you ok?" I always thought that one act of kindness can save someone's life or at least make their day a little bit better. You could help people too by doing the same thinga, but there's so much more like sitting at lunch with them, asking if they want to play soccer with you, or even just asking if they want to draw with you. All these things can help people if they are feeling sad and lonely.

Some ways that can help those who self harm and are violent are talking to someone trusted, meditating or even just taking a deep breath when you need to. Lots of people struggle to talk to other people about their problems so they hold it in, which is horrible and causes so much pain. When I want to cry or even just when I'm frustrated, I take a deep breath and it helps me calm down, so I think more people need to remember that one deep breath can change a lot in the mind.

I try to keep a positive mindset when I'm around people. What I think is if you have bad energy and are around people you can give bad energy to them which goes around and causes so much sadness and violence. People just need to remember that hope never fades and that there is a good side in every human being in this world.

I am a student ambassador at my school and what I have learned is that you should always show kindness no matter what. I have an idea to start a kindness club. We could do it some time during the day at school. We could have people come and they could meet others, it would be nice for the kids that don't have friends to join so then they can meet new people, everyone would be welcome even all grades. We could also play games, watch movies, and go out into the community and do different types of community service. This would be so much fun for everyone who believes and supports kindness and would like to be a part of something that represents them. It's so much better to take one deep breath together than one on your own, it can help make the world better a little at a time.

Natalie Bench – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Expeditionary Learning – Teacher, Shawna Andreasen



### V Is For Violence

In my life, I have witnessed many different types of violence. However, the most recent type of violence that has impacted me came in the form of self harm by one of my peers. When we think of violence, what we think about is a hero fighting a villain, or soldiers fighting in a war. But a lot of the time we forget about self violence. My parents always warn me about being kind to others and to always stand up to bullying. But one thing I had to learn on my own was that violence can be an inside battle too. Youth violence has affected my life by making me feel scared of my own school bathrooms and the reason for this is violence.

One day, in the middle of science, I had to use the bathroom. When I knocked on the stall door no one answered. After a few moments I opened the door and went in. I looked under the stall and I saw someone lying on the ground with blood all over the floor. I did not know who it was or what exactly I was looking at so I ran back to my science room and told my teacher that I thought someone had passed out in the bathroom.

A girl had intentionally cut her wrist because she attempted suicide. A lot of teachers rushed to the bathroom and called an ambulance, they took me into the office and I talked to a counselor they had there. I felt a little uncomfortable talking to the counselor. I felt weird talking to her on such a sensitive topic. I felt a little bit better after talking to her because I could get that weight off my shoulders. At that moment I felt scared. I did not know if they were ok. When I first walked into the stall, I felt like I was going to puke. There was so much blood on the floor I thought I was in a horror movie. I was standing in the stall next to them not knowing if they were okay. I felt a lot of pressure on me after finding the student because I knew I would be asked a lot of questions about what had happened.

After the incident I felt really disgusted. The whole time my stomach was twisting and turning I felt nauseous. That day, I brought home lunch and could not eat any of it I felt too disgusted to eat. My friends made me feel better, and later I was able to eat a couple of crackers and a few skittles. My teachers said I got help at the right time and handled the situation very appropriately.

Now, I feel alot better. Although, I do sometimes get random flashbacks of what happened or something that reminds me of what happened. The school bathrooms still remind me of what happened. I still avoid the bathrooms at school. My friends comfort me and will go into the other stall and wait for me or they will wait by the door to stay by my side. Even though that day has greatly impacted me, I'm still glad that I went into that stall. And was able to get help quickly because if I hadn't, I hate to think of what could have happened.

You may be asking what are the causes of youth violence? There are probably many different causes but in my opinion, after witnessing a peer who had violently inflicted harm on themselves, I can think of a few Peer pressure and low self esteem. Both of these causes can have a bad impact on kids, teens and adults. Peer pressure is when you are influenced by your peers to do something or act in a different way. Some ways peer pressure can affect you is first, doing something you do not want to do second pressure can persuade you to do stuff you should not be doing. The third way is you do it to look cool and or act like your peers around you. Sometimes peer pressure can be positive. Like, if you feel like you can't do something but your friends encourage you to believe in yourself. Violence often occurs with peer pressure Violence often occurs with peer pressure in a way that is negative.

Low self esteem is a bad way we think about ourselves. We criticize ourselves from time to time. How might others cause low self esteem? Bullying? If you always think bad about yourself or judge yourself negatively all the time this may lower your self esteem. Low self esteem can make you feel bad about yourself and you can think you do not belong here. You may think the world does not want you and you do not belong. When you think you do not belong you may try to get rid of yourself. A way to have high self esteem is to compliment yourself and to stay positive even when times get tough. Being a positive influence and being kind to others can help your peers feel like they belong and possibly cause their self esteem to rise as well.

What I can do about youth violence is let my peers know that if they are feeling bad about themselves or about a situation that they can always talk to a Counselor or trusted adult. Talking to a counselor or trusted adult may make you feel uncomfortable so you can call or text 988. 988 online counselors that you can talk to if you don't feel comfortable talking to a counselor in person. For 988 you do not have to tell them your name or they do not have to meet you in person. You can talk to a trusted adult about your problems. If you talk to a counselor you can probably get the help you need if you need help. I can encourage someone wanting to commit violence others or themselves. To go talk to a counselor or a trusted adult or even let them talk to me. What I can do is be a positive influence to others and help them make good decisions. I can help them feel better and make them feel wanted in the world.

Being an influence can affect a person's life in a positive way or a negative way. You always want to be nice to others because you never know what other people are going through. Being a good influence can really help someone that needs the support. A little goes a long way.

Youth violence comes in many forms and can occur anywhere, even in school. Unfortunately, the form I encountered was violence a peer inflicted upon themselves. This has impacted me in a way that I never imagined. A simple task of going to the bathroom now causes fear and flashbacks of a time I wish I could forget. I am glad that I was able to get help for a fellow student in a serious time of need and that I have a support group of friends who are there anytime I need them. So the next time you feel like someone may have low self esteem or are being peer pressured to do something that could hurt themselves or others, stepping in may not be what you want to do, but in order to stop youth violence, we have to.

Olivia Ocana – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High School – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine



Second Chance

I'm fine,  
You don't have to ask, Even though you didn't, I'm fine  
The world,

Or my perspective *on* the world,

*Of* the world,

is screaming chaos, the jealousy arising in the air, As if it's the air itself,  
*as if*

The jealousy is like the pollution, needing to be countered out by the kindness, That's no where,  
I'm fine

I see the peace in the chaos just trying to get by, but I can also see it fade away as it's pushed to the  
ground without a second thought,  
without a second chance

I want a second chance It's my fault, isn't it?  
I could've said something But I didn't  
I Should Have said something Something  
Anything

Any one thing Anything at All But I didn't No, I'm fine  
It's not my fault?  
There the bully?  
But I'm the one who could have defended My friend  
There the one one who insulted My friend  
I didn't say anything and that's why, I'm  
to blame  
I'm fine

I am not overthinking it I'm fine  
I Am the bully Stop  
asking,  
I'm perfectly fine

"Stop worrying so much!"

Sorry

"Why're you so quiet"

Nobody even listens to me when I speak, And I hate it  
I just want my second chance "Try  
hard"  
I'm just trying to do my best

A second chance would be nice though  
To fix the things I should've when I didn't

"Lazy"

I'm trying my hardest,

I'm just, so tired

"Of what, you do nothing"  
Of everything  
I just want it to stop

I just want *my* second chance

"What to stop? You're literally fine" Am  
I?

Am I the bully?

Am I the bully? I didn't say anything, but was that the problem? As I watched with a small smile as the girl "no one likes," except me, came over. She didn't know though. Did she? She would be marked with Icarian disappointment if she thought anyone else at this table liked her. I could practically see the insults circulating about her. No one says anything, we all just remain neutral and continue working with her. We were as confused as we weren't as we worked together on the assignment. "I'll go ask the teacher," the girl no one likes says. That was nice of her. But as I look in my book the immature, snarky, artificial, boring, devil-ish girl so stuck-up she can't get down begins to speak. Not one good thing to describe her, yet she's considered perfect? I hate her with everything only because it's worth it though. She spits the venom out as if it's her second nature. One insult after another, about one person, the girl no one likes.

"God she's so annoying," the devil-ish girl says. I'm surprised the girl no one likes doesn't hear, considering she's just across the room. The colorful things I or anyone could say, but I don't. Why don't I? Am I just as bad as her? The girl no one likes comes back, but we hold our neutral faces, as if nothing happened. As if we were also talking about her, as if. I can taste the spit in my mouth, along with the guilt, as it remains closed, but so do the other girls. I am just as bad as any of them, aren't I? I am the bully as well, aren't I?

What is youth violence?

Youth violence is keeping all these things bottled up to the point where it's tiring. Youth violence is the act of causing pain to yourself, others, anyone. But it's also an escape for a lot of people, a terrible, horrible, upsetting escape. That no one should turn to. I'd be surprised if you haven't thought of it based on the amount of catty, obnoxious, spiteful, and malicious people there are. Is it that hard, is it that time consuming to the point where you have to walk on your path of Youth Violence that you can't just be nice.

What causes Youth Violence?

According to Consumer Health News "Students who are victimized are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors towards others."

That for me isn't true. I feel horrible when someone hasn't even specifically bullied me, but someone else. I try my hardest to be nice, it's not as easy as it seems. I'm too nice, easy to confide in, I haven't met anyone like me to confide in. I'm like the therapist that isn't getting paid enough, but I'm not going to stop, I don't want to be rude. I want to talk to someone, but I'm not going to. Why would I? I don't care if they don't understand how I'm feeling and that they're a stranger. I would just rather keep things bottled up. And then, you get to a point where you say you're used to it, but it's hurting you. And you're hurting yourself, but you don't care. You are causing this "youth Violence" to yourself even when you don't realize it.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." - Martin Luther King jr.

How can I stop Youth Violence?

How can I stop Youth Violence? We can't stop it if we don't understand it. I, myself, can't stop it, but I can help. I can always be kind, I can always speak up when someone is being bullied, I can always help myself when I am struggling.

No matter what we have all made mistakes, we have all been the bully, so we know how it feels, we know what could have helped.

But, what can "We" do? We're kids, we shouldn't be experiencing these things yet, or even at all. We should be being kids not worrying about suicide and youth violence. The adults can't change what happens when they are not experiencing youth violence themselves. In my personal experience what would have helped me is being comfortable enough to go to the teacher and tell her about this, and not have to worry about being the "tattle tale", "the snitch", or what my so-called classmates would say, which is always reassuring.

"We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." - Martin Luther King jr. The change of youth violence might take a while but it can happen, we just have to overcome it.

Riley Banks – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan



What It Means to Me

Youth violence to me is bullying. It is walking into a room full of people your age or older and thinking, “these people hate me, and they want me out”.

It is sitting down beside people that you never would be around if it weren't for proximity and wondering when the class period will end so you can go to a class that you enjoy for both the classwork and the environment. It is going from one period to the next, passing people that say nasty things about you and other people and just trying to lay low and ignore them in favor of yourself. It is being taunted, so thoroughly despised for existing in the same building as another because it's required by law for you to be there and they chose to go to class, just as you did. It is making horrible mistakes that draw others' attention, bringing everything down on you so much harder, and not being able to cope properly because you are far too sensitive to the people that berate and look down on you.

It is venting to friends that you barely see during the days and telling them about those that hurt you, in small increments that break you down just a bit more. It is crying in dark rooms at night and listening to music that makes the hurt come down stronger, because all your life you've grown up feeling like a bad person and seeing the pain coming down on you and welcoming it as some form of divine punishment. It is being so different from your peers and feeling like an outcast because of the vast differences between you and the rest of them. It is wishing that you could understand, could be better, could be a sympathetic and kind person at heart instead of a vile creature groomed to horrible perfection by every second you've spent staring at computer screens, phones screens, TV screens, and every word spoken to or around you by every person you have ever been in a room with. It is growing up blasted by every terrible event in the world, free to view on technology present in the room, and learning about murder, drug use and abuse, rape, arson, peoples' rights being removed and restricted and never having existed, and so much more that lurks around every rotten corner of this city, state, country, continent, the entire world. It is knowing that these things can happen, and do happen every day, among even your peers, and being unable to do anything but watch and listen, and hope you aren't added to any of those numbers.

To me, youth violence is so much more than drama at school and traumatic events that occur so often around you that you simply move on when you hear of every case. It lives in your brain, memories of discussions with family and friends about nightmarish scenarios that should only get to breathe, to live in stories on the news and online, not in your friends' and families' homes. It is the numbed feeling of being exposed to so much hatred and disturbing content that when you're told about such things you know it's not comical, but you cannot help the way that you have developed, and your brain fixates on the details that would be funny in other context, but not for the one it really is in. It is seeing yourself in the mirror and thinking that you are not enough, not right, there's something wrong and that's because it's all you focus on. It's the negatives, the bad days and nights and every wrong turn that comes back to bite with a vengeance and deep sinking teeth. It is hoping that one day you could get somewhere, only to feel like that will never happen because you can't even get yourself to sit up and think hard enough to write an essay or do your homework. It is never truly experiencing the true horrors of the world around you, and just being scraped by the tip of it.

Youth violence is being that evil. It is being the root of the pain felt by peers and friends and family and knowing that there's something off, but you ignore it because you are not at the point in your life to see that what you do daily tears everything apart, a world of opportunity torn down before it could even be built. It is growing more mature (though not quite there and possibly never truly getting there) and hating yourself for being so cruel and unfair to the people you cared about back then, and then letting the cycle repeat. It is therapy, wanting the relief it could bring but fearing truly speaking your mind and letting your thoughts slip out like water in a bottle that's just barely unsealed because you fear the consequences of it. It is years later, when you are told by your mother that you were almost expelled, and wondering where everything went wrong so early, because you stopped attending that school after second grade.

To me, youth violence is just the minimal experience. To some, it could be losing loved ones and getting angry, lashing out and pushing back because you can't stand the world without them around and demanding for them back, even demanding justice. To others it could consist of abuse, physical harm from guardians meant to be safe, or substance abuse because the rest of your friends are doing it so why shouldn't you? Or it's the getting into fights and unable to do anything as it expands and exaggerates. It could be school and/or home getting to the best of someone, driving them into depression and anger until they go off like a timer on an explosive. The possibilities can be endless, and there are so many that no one possible solution can solve it all. Every person needs help in some way, whether that be a support system for their mental and physical health, intervention from friends, family, or others, or simply moving them to a different classroom. The goal to help slow down youth violence, we need to listen, reach out to people, ask what they need, and if they don't want to speak out for themselves, or can't, maybe a push in the right direction isn't enough. If people could be more compassionate and kinder to the person next to them, it might just help. I know that not every person that aims their frustrations and other pent-up feelings are just trying to be mean for fun, and every person should be given a chance to remedy their behaviors, whether they have darker reasons for doing them or not.

Robert Smith – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Rachael Gunn



Violence has affected my life in a way I think others would not want, other kids, and parents. Now, I am a bigger kid, I am very emotional, and I have asthma. I Always have been. And other kids saw that, and definitely took that as a chance. They would make fun of me in the worst way. They would always try to lead me into playing games that include a lot of running, saying things like “it’s fine! You’ll be great at it!” and “it’ll be fun!” Then, once I tried to join them and start running, they would switch their attitudes and start to be very rude, calling me names like “sloth” “fat idiot” “fatty” and even “big chungus”, the name of a rabbit known for being obese. No matter what I'd do, they wouldn't stop. I tried to talk to a teacher, and they would stop them for a day or two, max, then they would continue. I had to learn to deal with it and try to act as if it's ok, and try to find people that are as weird and quirky as me. Which, luckily, I did. And they have helped me so much, and I am so happy I found them.

Youth violence comes from all different places. It could be simple bullying, home violence, having been with the wrong people at the wrong times, or even going through abuse and drug usage. But no matter what, it's a horrible thing to go through. Someone who goes through so much violence at such a young age can go under a lot of stress, even enough to do things like suicide and drugs. They go under so much stress from what other people say or do, that they will do things to hurt others and even themselves, forgetting about everything else that they love or did love. No matter what makes them resort to violence, it is not ok, and not many people do anything to stop it. That is the one thing I don't understand. In the website [justice.gov](http://justice.gov), it says “**Sixty percent of American children** were exposed to violence, crime, or abuse in their homes, schools, and communities.” That means that at least sixty percent of our parents have gone through some sort of violence. That's over half, And yet not many try to change how things are done and help end violence.

Now as a kid, I know that I don't have much power. Adults get to vote. Congress decides laws. Nation leaders decide who to make peace with and who to try to fight. But as a kid, there are a few things I can do. I just need to step up and try to change something. I could try to end a blacktop fight. I could help a kid instead of just watching and laughing. I could enter something that's like the “Do the Write Thing Challenge”. I could even see if there is a movement of sorts in my local area and try to join it. But something I know I can do, is I can help my other classmates and friends deal with what they are going through. I can support them if they are going through a rough time. I can help them if they need me to. I can do the right thing.

Rudy Guajardoru – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Sand Ridge Junior High School – Teacher, Amy Kendall

  
Self to self talk

Hey lifes hard

And i've never imagined it would be like this

Me looking at families wishing if I could be them  
Wishing there's a way out to numb my pain  
A way out of life because i'm an outcast A  
disappointment  
Telling myself god messed up on me  
It's painful for your mom to tell you "I  
wish you were gone"  
But who am I

~~Five years old~~ Young and having suicidal thoughts But I  
don't really want to die  
I just want some relief

Another time to think what I got instead of what I don't have I  
hate trying to be perfected when nobody is  
I hate my hood up and hidden

With my heart breaking every time it's mothers and fathers day Because I  
don't have a gift to give  
But look on the bright side Why  
give up now  
I'm not a disappointment

Because if I was I would have given up

But no matter how many times i've been hit I'll always get up

***How has youth violence affected my life***

*When my mom had one month left for me to be born then my dad died by overdosing on drugs and my mom decided to move to indiana because she was depressed and she wanted to get away from the family and then had me over there and after that, she met a man named Daniel he was a tall white guy who was a woman abuser and a drug attic. He would force me and my two other brothers to smoke weed and other things with him. He would beat us constantly. And there would also be some days where me and my brothers would be locked in the room without food and water in the middle of summer while Daniel and my mom were out of the house doing whatever they do. There would be times where our shirts were drenched in sweat from being in the attic without any AC to cold us. And we would get beat if we tried to get food and water but I was just a baby so my older brothers took the pain for me because us three were the only thing we had and I remember hearing my mom screaming like if she was burning in hell for thirty minutes because she got beat by him and got her hair ripped out. But Daniel wasn't the dumb one because my mom always ran back to him and got us abused. But after six years of torment and torture and when she lost all six kids she had she finally opened her eyes to realize that Danial was nothing but distruction.*

**What are the causes of youth violence**

*The cause of youth violence can be many things like some are parents beating them and having a very bad childhood like mine, some are bullying and some can be depression. It's all different and it can be bad because it can lead to suicide and that's not a cool thing. Especially if you are the cause to suicide it would haunt you for your rest of your life. And it's not good to bully someone too because it makes the people you are bullying feel farther from earth and in their darkest moments and when you are in your dark moments it would be so hard to feel yourself again because you'll be dumb of all of your feelings. And one thing is that when your parents don't really show their kids attention it can lead to gang relationships and breaking the law. And another thing is when kids don't have attention from their parents it leads to bullying too. Like taking out every piece of anger they have in them out on other kids and like I said about the gangs they also do bad things just to be noticed by people because they don't get the attention that they need from their own parents.*

**What can I do against youth violence**

*Well right now the most I can do is just stand up to bullying And if someone is struggling from home I can most likely talk with them or tell their counslier so I can try to stop the same exact things that happened to me to them so other kids don't have to go through the same thing I had to. But for the future when I have kids and stuff I can just stay away from all drugs and everything that made my life miserable to see my parents have in their hand and their mouth.*

*Also I won't beat them the same way that my mom and her boyfriend did to me and my other brothers, so they can live a good and healthy life like I'm living now. And when I get older I can just show myself that I'm not what my parents are, that I'm better than them and I can do things right. And I'm going to do all of this so my kids won't have to go through what I had to go through.*

Ryder Peterson – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Butler Middle School – Teacher, Anna McNamer



### Youth violence

Have you ever been near a still and silent pond and dropped a pebble into the water, and see how it has a ripple effect? Youth violence can be a ripple effect if no one stops it. I have never really been affected by youth violence, but my dad sure has. When he was ten years old he was playing hide and seek with his little brother, when some teenagers came and were talking. My dad, being only 10 years old at the time and not thinking, told them “be quiet! I’m hiding”. This angered them so they went over and beat up my dad. One of the highschoolers, who was 17, punched him so hard that it broke his jaw and the guy's fist. This started the ripple effect that then alerted my grandma and grandpa to call the police and chase them down, this then got the police involved. My dad had his jaw wired shut for 6 months. This ripple effect continues on to today. My father is constantly giving me counsel on how to handle bullies or dangerous situations. In fact, he jokes that if it was up to him I would walk around in bubble wrap and never hold a pencil because it has the potential of stabbing me in the eye. My dad being a victim of youth violence had rippled down to me even after all these years. It even affected the highschoolers that went to jail.

Now at these times, school and online is when most people have received youth violence. Getting bullied by teasing in person or online and still have a rippling effect on a person’s life, and when you bully or torment someone like this it can spread from people to people, because now that guy is mad, then he is mean to others who also become mean and it impacts their lives. For example: One day when I was walking home from school, and this teenager pulled up in a car and threatened to beat me up if I didn't give him my air pods. I strictly said no and walked away. I was still on school grounds. I feel one gets bullied at school grounds the most because that is where most kids in the area meet up with their friends, and want to show off. Another example is; video games. Gamers knowing that their identity is hidden, can spread harsh words to other players. Those players then being victim to cyber bullies are more likely to cyberbully others. This brings back the idea of a negative ripple effect.

A question I had was, what started the ripple effect for youth violence? Why does a person choose to be mean or hurtful? Most of the time youth violence is caused by another person bullying another young peer or even on rare occasions an adult. Youth violence are people that may do acts of violence or bullying to get attention from friends, family, or trying to climb the social ladder. Maybe they are also having a hard time with youth violence and their response is to bully others because of what is happening to them at home or by other people around. For example a loss of a family member can lead to behavior in an aggressive way, or maybe the individual is hurting from a recent divorce that ended poorly and the child is left suffering, or worst case is the person is a victim of abuse themselves.

If you see someone receiving youth violence, or you are a victim of youth violence there are a few things that you can do: show empathy, this is because you do not know what they are going through. Stand for what is right, empathy is good but if they are doing something wrong like making fun of your family and things that are really precious to you. You should stand for what is right and confront them on what they are doing is wrong and stop the ripple from spreading to others. If you or your peers don't do these things this could cause the ripple effect to keep going and potentially hurt another really bad.

People can agree that youth violence is very dangerous mentally and physically, and can spread like a very dangerous disease to others around them. One should always try to avoid youth violence, or try to stop it and confront them if things get serious. In this essay I have talked alot about the bad ripple effect, but there are also good ripple effects that can spread and cheer people up! It is my hope that I can counteract a negative ripple with a positive one. This can be achieved by giving compliments, befriending those around me, or cheering on people's achievements. Hopefully with my own ripple effect, it may encourage other people to have a positive ripple.

**Samara Van Wagenen – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Butler Middle School – Teacher, Anna McNamer**



All kinds of Youth Violence.

Racism is a very big part of youth violence and also a big problem in our present day society. Today there are many kids struggling from racism and youth violence. Youth Violence is any type of bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying and other aims of violence towards a youth person.

Youth violence has affected my life in all different ways. The first way is racism. In elementary and middle school I got severely picked on because of my race. It wasn't big things, it was little aims of racism. Like saying something about my curly hair, pulling my chair when I'm sitting on it, etc. I haven't been called most of these but now that middle schoolers are a bit more educated on stronger words, I have seen a lot of name calling to other people. Mostly I have seen people call colored people, mostly black people names like, "monkey" and "cotton picker." And one time someone told me to go back to the jungle.

I am confronted with youth violence at school because some of the kids are uneducated and bully. Another is social media because cyberbullying is one of the most common uses of youth violence. An example of cyberbullying is when I was five I made a youtube video with my mom and we dressed up as Mal and Maleficent from the Descendants movie and made a smoothie challenge. A couple weeks later I go back to the video and someone commented, "You can't be Mal because your black" And I was hurt and we turned of the comments right away.

There can be many ways of causing youth violence but some are media influence, your communities and neighborhoods, domestic violence and child abuse, peer pressure, drug and alcohol use, traumatic events/ptsd, and mental illness.

Lastly, we need to step forward and speak up on youth violence. Just imagine, we don't have any youth violence in our life. Does it feel good? Because it should, our lives would be so much better. This is why we need to teach these important concepts at young ages. We should step forward on youth violence because we should adopt policies and practices that create safe and supportive environments. Teach teens skills to navigate social and emotional challenges. Connect students to health and mental health services. Build strong bonds between staff and students to improve connectedness to school. I am a 12 year old 7th grade girl that has been confronted with youth violence and this is my signal to tell you to do the right thing.

Sierra Davies – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High School – Teacher, Maria Georgiou



### The Fire of Violence

It feels like a burning fire Hope  
turns to ash Everything begins  
to darken The love is blinded by  
smoke It feels it will never end  
My spirit runs for cover  
Everything is caving in There is  
nothing left to save  
Something once beautiful is now gone I  
reach out, hoping for help  
But no one ever came

World Health Organization explains that around 42% of boys and 37% of girls around the ages of 10-24 are exposed to bullying. They also explained that 42% of homicides every year are youth that are in between the ages of 10-24. One in eight people under the age of 18 have reported sexual abuse. What do these things all have in common? I will give you two words: Youth Violence.

#### **What is youth violence?**

Youth violence is directed to people ages 10-24. From the CDC website it states “It can include fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness”.

Youth violence has been a serious health concern in our community for years, even generations. Any youth can be affected by youth violence. Including your family, friends, neighbors, even yourself.

#### **How has youth violence affected my life?**

My friend was affected by youth violence in seventh grade. Boys would tell her “you should go kill yourself” or “you are useless”. These were very harmful to her but she never told me so I couldn't help her. She tried to commit suicide but was stopped by another friend. She did not tell this to anyone and the boys continued to bully her. She finally built up the courage on the last day of school to tell me what had been going on. I tried to tell teachers and counselors but they couldn't do anything. They needed to have known sooner because they said it was too late. They needed to be told sooner but would try to see what they could do. Luckily they didn't do that to my friend the next year. But this did ruin her life and will probably continue to hurt her. She has never been as happy as she once was and me and my friends do everything we can to try to put a smile on her face. This is all because she was affected by youth violence.

**What are the causes of youth violence?**

Say there was a person named Michael that had plenty of friends that he loved to hang out with. But these friends started to bully other kids. Michael didn't like this but still hung out with them because he didn't have anyone else to hang out with. Eventually Michael's friends forced him into bullying other kids because they told him if he didn't they wouldn't hang out with him any more. Michael ended up bullying a kid that was a little bit left out because they all thought he was a nerd and his name was Sam. Michael bullied Sam every day calling him names and pushing him whenever he saw the Sam. Michaels friends liked this and said this is just what he needed to do to stay friends with them. Sam had one friend who was a female named Lily. She was the nicest person to Sam in the whole school. Lily decided to help Sam. She started out with being mean back to Michael. She figured out how to make Michael embarrassed and how to make him feel as sad as Sam was. She had a talk with Michael and after a few days of being mean to Michael. She found out that he was forced to bully Sam. She felt bad for what she had done to Michael. She invited him to be friends with her and Sam instead of with Michael's mean friends. It took a little while because Michael didn't want to lose his friends but finally stopped hanging out with all his old friends and started to hang out with Lily and Sam. Same even forgave Michael for what he had done to him.

What does this story have to do with youth violence even though it is fake you may ask? It shows some examples of why and how youth violence is caused and how to fix it. One of the first ways this story showed youth violence is caused by peer pressure. In this story Michael knew if he didn't bully people he wouldn't have his friends he always hung out with. The second example was doing it for attention. In the story it gave Michael the attention of his friends that he was doing what they wanted. The third example is trying to get back at who started bullying. In the story Lily, who was friends with Sam, started to bully Michael because he was mean to her friend. There are other ways that youth violence is started but I just named a few examples.

**What can I do about youth violence?**

There are multiple ways anyone can help to prevent youth violence. You do not have to be super popular or super strong to prevent youth violence. You can start a prevention program or group that prevents youth violence or you can join one already created. If there is someone that you know that is dealing with youth violence. Stop the person that is causing some sort of violence. If you are not a social person or someone that is too scared to go up to the bully you can still help. By talking to someone who is willing to stop the bully this could be someone your age or even an adult. This seems scary to some to help out because they are worried about getting bullied themselves. But anyone can help, you can even stop the violence before it starts. Some people don't help prevent youth violence because they don't think it's their problem. If you know about it it is your responsibility as a human being to do something!

You may be scared, frightened perhaps but there are plenty of ways to help it doesn't even have to be about a certain person. You could write about it just like I am doing now. Let me ask you a question. Do you really want to have that guilt for the rest of your life that someone had something terrible happen to them and you did nothing to prevent it? For example, what if someone told you about how they get bullied, you never said anything, then they ended up committing suicide a few weeks later because of how much they were bullied? You could end up having that thought that would haunt you that if you had said something they might still be here right now. Do you really want that? This is why we all need to help stop youth violence.

No matter where you are, who you are, you can help to stop youth violence. You may feel as if you are as useless as a fish on land, But you're not. You're as useful as claws on a bear or as important as food for our bellies. You may be scared but life is scary. So i ask you now to help me, help everyone stop youth violence, you may think you wont make a difference but you won't know till you try just like you won't know if you will learn how to swim unless you get in that water. Always remember you can always do something to help.

Vierra Powell – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Ephraim Middle School – Teacher, Steve Weller



### Do the Write Thing

There's things that I hear each day,  
Things that I rather not relate or say,  
But I've always lived in a protected, clean place  
With friends and family, and always a kind face.  
I don't really know firsthand how cruel this life can be,  
But though I've never experienced it, its plain to see  
That violence directed at youth can change the people I live around,  
And how its hard for them to get back onto safe ground.  
I've heard many things about youth violence,  
And how it can damage one's common sense.  
Incidents I've heard of that happened close to home  
Show and teach me things I would've never known.

So many people have challenges each day,  
And its impossible to take them all away,  
But if we work to hard to do what's good  
We can create a community that includes everyone as it should.

I have a great family, with the best siblings and mom and dad,  
And because of this I haven't had experiences others have had.  
Parents are sometimes abusive to their children and teens,  
And this can lead the youth to dangerous feelings.  
I fear that those without proper love and care—  
Without a family with which to talk to and to share—  
Feeling ignored and hurt by neglect,  
May, in their hearts, inspire sparks of regret,  
Or anger because they are not treated like another,  
So many turn to violence to take it out on others.  
Sometimes its hard to forgive,  
And just go on, continuing to live,  
But those people must know that if they feel blue,  
There's always good alternatives that can help them through.

So many people have challenges each day,  
And its impossible to take them all away,  
But if we work to hard to do what's good  
We can create a community that includes everyone as it should.

The internet is a powerful tool,  
Giving us resources like Safari and Google,  
But it can hurt others deeply when people write down mean things,  
While in person, they wouldn't be so mean.  
And other people aren't able to get along  
With people who compete with them for who is superior in being strong  
In power or money or even genius,  
So some get out their frustration by turning on us.  
Then there are others who do try their best,  
And they want to put their anger at rest,  
But with no one who cares to cheer them on,  
It's hard for them as they struggle to stay strong.

So many people have challenges each day,  
And its impossible to take them all away,  
But if we work to hard to do what's good  
We can create a community that includes everyone as it should.

And so for all those youth who are abused by few,  
Don't hide those secrets, because they can ruin you.  
I've never been a witness of any bad scene,  
By I'll sympathize with you and try to do the right thing.  
Youth violence is so hard on teens,  
But as I stand by you, you can get through hard things.  
I will report to adults, and tell them what's going on,  
And they will stand by you, and help you be strong.  
I'll always be mindful of everything you're going through;  
I'll be as kind as I possibly can to you.  
And I'm not the only one who wants to help you go on,  
And there are many others who want you to make it and become sure and strong.

So many people have challenges each day,  
And its impossible to take them all away,  
But if we work to hard to do what's good  
We can create a community that includes everyone as it should.

Please, don't ever feel alone,  
Because there really are people who care for you and the courage you have shown.  
I know you've had trials and been misunderstood,  
But you're extra special, and you've got potential that's good.  
I know you're not perfect—none of us are—  
But you have the capability to shoot for an attainable star.  
The world can be dark and scary at times,  
But this life is really your's and mine.  
We can build what we want, become what we need  
And if we work hard, I know we can succeed.  
So many people have challenges each day,  
And its impossible to take them all away,  
But if we work to hard to do what's good  
We can create anything—a school, town, country, a world—that includes everyone as it should.

**Yarell Loya Dominguez – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Summit Academy Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace**



The truth

The following will be my own experience and perspective on youth violence.

Youth violence is a grave thing that many young people struggle with, but what is youth violence one may ask. Youth violence demonstrates a global public health problem that can include severe sexual and physical assault, but youth violence can also be acts from bullying and physical fighting. But there's more than just that. For example; in elementary school there can be bullies that make you feel insecure, make you hate yourself, and many young kids have ended their lives because of this kind of bullying. Well, when I was younger I was one of the many people that caused this kind of youth violence. Yes, I regret what I have done to many kids but I also want to state what I learned from this experience. When one learns one becomes a better person, right? Well, that's not always the case when I learned the reality of what I was doing and how it affected someone. It hit me. I was traumatized. The superiority and confidence I gained from bullying slowly faded away as I constipated the nerve racking feeling I had in my stomach. My body felt uneasy and my balance had completely vanished, before I knew it I had collapsed. My parents had woken me up and told me what happened. I was laying on the floor for 30 minutes. I couldn't give them an explanation of what caused this. Later that day I thought to myself "Why? Why did I do this?" I thought about it and concluded that the only reason why I was such a harsh person was because I knew how unintelligent I was, how stupid, and ugly I was. My own insecurities have caused the insecurities of others. I have learned that bullies don't have the help they need, you don't know the lives that other people live. One of my favorite teachers named Tiana Butler explained: "If people knew what was going on in someone's life we would be so much nicer to each other" meaning people seem to put on acts as soon as they notice someone really needs the help. Yes it benefits the people that have harsh conditions, but does it really? The illusion we give them is that we truly care about what's going on but we only do it because you need to not because you want to. Let me explain, society likes to put on a mask to pretend like they care but the second you turn your back they say bad things about you and how you "stand out". The place I grew up in wasn't the best place to grow up, and this was all around me. People making fun of others for being autistic and using gay or special needs as an insult.

Utah is a beautiful place and there are no flaws, right? But the things people struggle to see are the places that have poverty, gang violence, and the lack of a good community. My life in Utah has been a nightmare that I couldn't seem to escape. I grew up living in midvale, during this time I had found out that my dad was cheating on my mom and he tried to convince me to be on his side. Even though I saw him cheating. My heart had shattered into little bits realizing that my dad was trying to manipulate me, and it worked. I would start fights with my mom about it and think it was my fault that he ended up leaving. "Was I enough?" Questions were overflowing my mind with the concept of it being my fault. Every morning I knew my father wasn't in the right, but I continued to fight with my own mother. I was ever-so desperately grasping the desperation for a childhood with a father. Unfortunately, I was never able to live that life. My parents fought in front of me and I was crying not knowing what to do. "Do I call the cops" I thought, but did not because it was my dad. My brother gained the courage to fight back and helped my mom. My mom later called the cops and my father went to jail, for many charges; assault, child endangerment, child abuse, assault and battery.

Throughout the years I would live the life of a lonely child, but when I was in 6th I joined the school Summit Academy. This school saved my future and my education. After finding myself improving I got this phone call. My brother had been shot. I watched the walls crumble before me. Just as I thought I was gonna have the will to wake up in the morning, I found out my brother had gotten shot. The aggravating feeling I got made me think back to when my father had abused my mom. It seemed as if I restarted my life. Somebody so close to me had been near

death and it had shattered the dome I've been living in to feel "safe". Later that week my brother had arrived home, when I saw him he showed me the gunshot wound. Seeing the gunshot wound it felt as if my heart was pierced with a permanent wound of my own. My eyes grew wider when seeing the red blood in the twisted skin. Seeing an actual bullet that has penetrated my brother made me consider what the rest of our lives would be. "Would we have to hide for the rest of our lives?" I asked myself. It became apparent that the smile I had forced was an act for people's approval. The rest of the year I would treat everything and everyone with the lack of respect.

Knowing that I can't be home as much. I made Summit Academy "home". Summit Academy would later become the only place where I actually live the life I've always wanted to live, get the education I've always wanted, and have friends. Summit Academy made it possible for me to be popular and I earned so much respect from the students and teachers. This school also provides great opportunities for many others and makes sure people don't have to experience youth violence and if you are experiencing any they make it possible to talk to someone if wanted/needed.

The youth violence people experience is truly cruel and can make people's stomach turn. If you're ever feeling suicidal and need to talk to someone you can contact the number 801-273-8255. Global public health problems can be prevented by communicating with either teachers, cops, or parents. Having a good family environment is a great way to prevent youth violence, but also having quality education early in life is great. Unfortunately some don't get what they need at an early age but just remember it's never too late to save someone.

Zander Tanner – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 South Sevier Middle School – Teacher, Lesia Coe



Youth Violence

The green trees sway in the breeze  
 But you don't see what another person sees The  
 bright blue sky makes for happier days But the bull  
 still does not graze  
 The people smile from ear to ear  
 But some people's windows are not clear The  
 sunlight shines bright in every garden  
 But this doesn't mean some lives don't harden The  
 buds of a plant turn into beautiful flowers  
 But this does not mean everyone uses their plowers The lake is  
 a great place to look at fish  
 But this does not mean that everybody will like the swish The small  
 blue birds sing softly  
 But this does not make everyone's spirits lofty The  
 small bees bring pollen to a plant  
 But some are still reluctant The  
 plants grow grow grow But some  
 don't like the show  
 The mountains stand tall and strong But not  
 everybody can stay that long The happy  
 insects hide under rocks But some people  
 still have locks  
 The world is not always a place of woe  
 But sometimes people still feel the sting of a beroe

John was working on his project and he was almost finished. With this project, you have to build a replica of the Statue of Liberty out of popsicle sticks. John's worst fear as of that moment was that someone would knock over his hour's work of homework. Ten minutes had passed and his statue was still in perfect condition. Twenty minutes had passed and his figure was still in perfect condition. Thirty minutes passed, and Mia walked past his table and knocked the statue onto the floor. John scrambled to pick up his model like he was running from a bear. The figure was still intact, but it had a crack in one of the sticks. This would bring his score from an A down to a B, but he would still be able to turn it and present, so he wasn't too sad.

Mrs. Sorrow had now said that it was time to turn in their statues and, after waiting for a really long time, it was John's turn to present. He walked to the front of the classroom and said, "This is my replica of the Statue of Liberty." He paused and looked nervously at Mrs. Sorrow who was smiling at him, but it looked painful for her to do. "Based on my research, the part of this sculpture that I think symbolizes the best thing is th-" Someone at the front row had yelled, "BOO!" making John jump ten feet into the air and dropping the project he worked so hard on of work drop onto the hard floor with a loud shattering sound of clank cla clank clank clank.

John began to look around embarrassed, but on the inside, he was sobbing, sobbing, and sobbing. This may sound like such a stupid thing to cry about but that wasn't the only bad thing going on in John's life, there was so much more. Even so, John had been putting a fake smile on his face the whole school year, so everyone thought that this would not make him super sad if he was already that happy. One thought kept banging on the inside of his head. *"If they had known what he was going through would they still have done that?"*

### **How Has Youth Violence Affected My Life?**

This is actually a question I have never really thought about before, in fact, I don't even know if it has ever crossed my mind, and if it has, I didn't interpret it the same way as I do now. If you were to have asked me this question before I thought about it a bit more, then I would have said that I have never really been attacked or anything like that. This is not how I think about this now. Youth violence in my opinion is more of a mental subject rather than a physical subject, and putting it this way, youth violence has really affected my life. In my opinion, the biggest thing that has affected my life is the fact that people don't know what is happening in my personal life. It is kind of like the poem suggests, things may appear to be happy, but this may not be so. Because of this, they think, to put it simply, I am overreacting. In reality, I didn't overreact at all if you put it on top of all the other things that are going on. That is how youth violence has affected my life.

### **What Are The Causes of Youth Violence?**

In my opinion, the causes of youth violence would mostly be hardships in life. What I mean by this would be sort of like being picked on or maybe even just not having enough resources. This stuff could cause people to be worthless and depressed, which I think is an example I would use if someone were to ask me what youth violence was. Those are only just a few things that I think would cause youth violence.

### **What Can My Community And I Do To Reduce Youth Violence**

Youth violence is a terrible thing that is truly happening way too much and so it is very good idea to think of some ways that you can help reduce the amount of it. One way that I think we can help reduce youth violence would be to try to catch it and stop it if you are experiencing this. If you feel useless or like you are not worth it then talk to a counselor or a therapist. If you notice that someone in your community seems to be thinking depressing or possibly even suicidal thoughts, then go over and tell them how much you care for them and bring them cookies or a cake. Another thing that you could do to help reduce this terrible thing, don't try to hurt someone's feelings or make fun of them, because if you do, then you might be causing youth violence. With all these ways to help stop youth violence, let us move on!

Youth violence is a depressing subject and it makes me sad to think about. Definitely try to stop it if you see it happening to you, because if the sky is bright, blue and makes for happier days, they might not now that you are the bull that does not graze.

## *Utah's Do the Write Thing* *Organizing Committee*

---

**KIMBERLEE IRVINE**

*Second English Language Arts Curriculum Director,  
Weber School District*

**CUONG NGUYEN**

*Prevention Specialist  
Utah State Board of Education*

**TANYA ALBORNOZ**

*Coordinator  
Prevention and Student Services  
Utah State Board of Education*

**TINA MORANDY**

*Executive Secretary  
Prevention and Student Services*

**MILLIE MORTENSEN**

*Office Specialist  
Prevention and Student Services*

---

## *Utah State Board of Education* *Prevention and Student Services Staff*

---

**TANYA ALBORNOZ**

*Coordinator  
Prevention and Student Services*

**RITA BROCK**

*Prevention Specialist  
Child Sex Abuse and Human Trafficking Prevention  
Gang Prevention and Intervention Program*

**CATHY DAVIS**

*Prevention Specialist  
Suicide Prevention*

**ASPEN FLORENCE**

*Prevention Specialist  
Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention*

**MICHELLE GLAITTLI**

*School Counseling Specialist*

**BETHANY MARKER**

*School Counseling Specialist*

**CUONG NGUYEN**

*Prevention Specialist  
Restorative Practices*

**CLARRISSA STEBBING**

*Prevention Specialist  
Substance Abuse Prevention*

**AMY STEELE-SMITH**

*Prevention Specialist  
Bullying Prevention*

**TINA MORANDY**

*Executive Secretary  
Prevention and Student Services*

**MILLIE MORTENSEN**

*Office Specialist  
Prevention and Student Services*

Utah State Board of Education  
Prevention and Student Services  
250 East 500 South  
PO Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200  
(801) 538-7790 • Fax: (801) 538-7882  
[WWW.SCHOOLS.UTAH.GOV/PREVENTION/DTWT](http://WWW.SCHOOLS.UTAH.GOV/PREVENTION/DTWT)