

2024

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



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*Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Utah State Board of Education*

**Aspen Florence**

*Behavioral Consultant  
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*2023 DtWT National Finalist*

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Utah State Board of Education*

**Zachary Jackson**

*2023 DtWT National Finalist*

**Patty Norman**

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UTAH'S TWENTY-FOURTH 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 accountability, social justice, and system practices for each student. A student-focused, data-driven, systemic practice for all prevention work allows students to engage in an educational experience that results in the preparation and social capital necessary for college and career success and full participation in a global society.

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

## How the Campaign Works

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

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

How has youth violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

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

School districts reported that 1,540 students participated in classroom discussions, over 1,050 students prepared writing and 283 students decided to submit writings about youth violence for review. Students from the University of Utah and USBE's Student Support Section staff participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top two writings per participating school. The VIP Judges had the difficult task of selecting a boy and a girl national finalist along with runners up.

Utah's National Finalists will participate with other National Finalists at the *Do the Write Thing* National Recognition Ceremony in Washington DC this July. Finalists will meet with members of Utah's Congressional delegation to discuss the problem of youth violence. They will also attend a reception hosted by the Ambassador to the United States for the State of Kuwait. Finally, a book containing the students' writings will be placed in the Library of Congress. Congratulations to all students 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, Kuwait-America Foundation, Marriott International, National Campaign to Stop Violence, Southwest Airlines, Utah State Board of Education, University of Utah, and Wheeler Foundation.

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

# *National Finalists*

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

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

Zayden Maughan – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine



### Cogs in the System of Power.

The guilt  
like dark lava  
consumes me.

I feel  
like  
a crushed paper  
that can't be  
stretched out again.

Youth violence is a system that has control over the youth. Why I say it's a system is because if someone does something like bullying, it's to satisfy themselves or to satisfy a higher power to the bully. When an adult physically hurts their offspring it's to show their power, to yet again satisfy themselves. That's why I know that youth violence is a system of power. The effect of youth violence over generations is insane, the hold it has on the younger people of this generation is just crazy. But has youth violence changed at all? I mean with cell phones, and the internet being more modern than it was in the 2000's. I know that social media has affected the youth by setting a golden standard that just isn't realistic. The kids that aren't the sharpest tool in the shed see the golden standard and they are in self-disgust. They just hate themselves and then they go and take it out on someone else. In the past it was a lot better, I mean yeah there were still bullies, but I don't think they are as brutal as the youth of this generation.

Anger  
has me burgundy red  
at school  
the lounge act  
to punch education.

Youth violence is caused by a desperate need for attention in many different ways. For example if a kid is having a problem at home like neglect, it can be caused if a parent doesn't pay attention or has too much stuff to do. A child that has dealt with neglect can be un-responsible in their adult life because of the imprint, or should I say the lack of imprint that the parent left on the neglected child.

Sadness  
the color of aero blue  
has me feel  
like a school table  
A perfect circle you can't spin  
or roll.

Youth violence is a giant that is hard to stop. The giant cannot be brought down with one swing but it definitely will help. You could do things like be someone's friend. If someone's having troubles at home let someone know. Things like that are the swings towards the giant. Someone that has experienced youth violence can lash out at others. At first glance it seems like they are being a jerk for no reason, but the stuff that they might have gone through, it can be justifiable the way they can act. How can I help this behavior? When you talk to them you can come from a place of understanding, and it just might mend them a little. What's the point of acting nice to someone that's rude if they might forget what I did? Well someone that has experienced youth violence doesn't have someone that lights up their day. So if you are nice to them then it will make them see a different perspective, and your mark will last. Youth violence is a system to please someone that is above you. The cause of youth violence is the lack of attention from the higher ups, or someone you look up to. Youth violence can't be brought down with one swing, but being kind to someone can really help their troubles with youth violence. Youth violence has really changed my view of the world I think of things like they are set there by something. And i'm not fully in the present, but I've gotten better about it. The people I have met in my life and my friends have really helped me, and my mistakes have too. The experiences I have had have really changed my outlook on things. I stop thinking so much, and I live as much in the present as I can.

I witness my aggression flood and destroy. It's almost like a tsunami. My ears take in the pain of sobbing and groaning. I taste the shock of my feelings, it feels like a taser. I feel my battered crimson hands. I smell nothing, almost when you try to think of the color clear, or maybe it was a color too painful to taste.

I was playing 4-square with kids in 4th grade. One of the kids was talking so much crap. I snapped. I hurt him. I had so much anger built up because of the social system, other kids, school, ect. I was angry all the time because I was just a weirder kid. Luckily it wasn't just a weird little feud. I learned how to control my emotions. I also made amends with the kid I hurt. But if you think, I was hurt because of youth violence. I mean it didn't feel too good being neglected for a while.

"If you choose not to decide you still have made a choice"

-Neil Peart

You can help stop youth violence if you choose to "decide".

Adeline White – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine



The Hottest Place in Hell

“The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.”

-Dante

My hands  
on the grip of my chair

tightened

as I held my book in the other hand.  
My heartbeat grew louder

and louder,

almost as if it was thundering in my head.  
The feeling of

Guilt

washed over me  
even though

I wasn't even there.

I imagine in my head what I would have done, would I stand and watch or would I have truly gone to help them. Seeing the faces of my friends share these stories with such ease showed me how strong they were no matter how bad the situation could have been. I could taste my dry tongue on the roof of my mouth as I sat there realizing so many of these girls have gone through such hard situations multiple times as well. Hearing each intricate disturbing tale from them and how it made them feel made me become hyper-aware of my own body and senses. Thinking back to all the times I've had many other friends struggle with bullying or hard home lives hurts me deeply feeling like there isn't much I can do for them other than comforting them and giving advice.

Being called things like monkeys and constantly being asked for the N word pass seemed like such an overwhelming situation that I didn't think I would be able to handle, yet each one of them spoke as if it was a daily occurrence. I knew in the manner they were speaking that none of the name calling were jokes, the way their peers spoke towards them were in such disrespectful ways that I couldn't believe these kids would say that.

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics in 2018, one third of the globe's youth is bullied. Our generation today will cancel someone they don't even know online for doing something wrong but turn a blind eye when their own peers are bullied, children most of all.

Jealousy

The blazing emerald eyes  
of jealousy

consumes us.

In the comparison of

each other

we become addicted  
like a phone,  
Eyes

Stuck

to another

.....life

Anger then unfurls  
like a blood red pool,

Infecting

the pure waters around it

Finally,  
Disappointment fabricates the sapphire tears,

we're a chair with no support.  
Falling to the ground from the feeling of

Inadequacy.

"Misery loves company, but does not reciprocate."  
-Addison Mizner

Youth violence has affected me through my friends. Friends I know in and outside of school have expressed their struggles and knowing that all I can really do sometimes is comfort them even when they don't believe my words can be very mind consuming. I know that I can't be the one to fix everyone's problems which is really frustrating because I care so deeply about them and I want them to feel better but at the end of the day I can give advice and defend them but I won't always be there to take care of them. Youth violence has also affected me by thought, I tend to care quite a bit about what others think which leads to me having a little bit of a hard time saying no. This youth violence isn't caused by anyone else but myself and while I know I am a confident person I still take into account many times what others think as well even when the situation doesn't matter.

Youth violence is caused by low self-esteem. When people have low self-esteem either caused by other peers or adults they tend to express their feelings by making others feel the same by tearing down their spirits as well. This causes a vicious cycle that makes kids continue to hurt each other or themselves. When kids don't have a good support system that they trust, the kids tend to find ways to show their feelings in an unhealthy manner.

We can help youth violence in many ways but most importantly showing that they aren't alone in their situations and that they can get help. By having kids share their own stories and situations the people going through them as well will hopefully be more open to sharing their issues and getting support to fix it. We need to teach kids that it is okay to be vulnerable in serious situations such as these and that asking for help is never an issue. We should show our youth that we not only need to pay attention to our health but other kids as well and try to look out for each other. We also need to acknowledge that it is not our peers that hurt us but adults too and we should teach them as well to pay attention to their children's state of mind and check in with them if they are doing good. Fixing these kinds of situations are not something that will always be quick or come easy so we need to remember that fixing this problem will take time and forcing children to say everything they feel as soon as we ask will not create a space they will feel safe in. By creating safe spaces for our youth to express their feelings and creating a community with the youth to support each other we can help children realize they are not alone.

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

*National  
Runners-Up*

*Althea Gape*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Roy Junior High**

**Teacher, Maria Georgiou**

*Samuel Rye*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Summit Academy - Draper**

**Teacher, Kim Arminen**

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



Being young has proven to be difficult time and time again. You encounter many troubles and obstacles that most of the time you have to go through yourself. Assignments, expectations, pressure. They are all thrown at you like a bomb, expecting you to finish and get it over with. As if you were a robot. During your youthful years, there is going to be a time where you will come across violence. Youth violence. It can happen when you don't realize it. When you were just too blind to see. Too focused on everything else that you were too blind to notice it was happening. Youth violence is a scary being. It can sneak up on you like a predator lurking in the bushes to catch its prey. You never know how much it can truly hurt you until you have gone through it yourself. Until it has impacted your life. This is my story.

How does youth violence affect your daily life?

Growing up, I learned to call other relative members of my family aunts and uncles if I don't exactly know what they are to me. I even do it to people who aren't in my family just out of respect. But there were these two people. Two guys. Who I call my uncles. I loved both of them so much. Or at least, I thought so.

The first uncle: I would always hang out with him when I was little. Little as in I mean a toddler. We were like peanut butter and jelly, always together, never apart. We would play badminton, laugh with each other, and sometimes he even gives me piggyback rides! Our family thought it was funny. How a teenager such as him got along really well with a toddler like me. It was as if we were long lost siblings. There was never a dull moment with him around. Well, that's what I thought at least, until I was over at his house one day. Since I was still a toddler, it was natural for me to be hyper. We were playing around and he was teasing me. I remember I was laughing so much, I started clenching my stomach because it had started hurting. I continuously giggled like a hyena when he suddenly told me to follow him somewhere. Of course, the curious and hyperactive kid that I was, I followed him and he started taking me to the back of the house. Curious as I was, I thought he was going to give me a present. A gift of some sort...

Well he gave me a present alright. One that I would never fail to forget. He crouched down to my level. So I can see him eye to eye.

His eyes... His once soft and caring eyes had now turned serious and dangerous. Like a predator eyeing his dinner. Full of lust and darkness.

My little mind wasn't able to comprehend the reason why he took me to the back in the first place. The reason why we were hidden from everyone. He began touching me in areas he knew he shouldn't. And I just stood there. Confused and helpless. Scared and frozen. Thankfully, out of fear, I slipped away from his grip and ran. Ran away like a frightened animal. I ran back to my mother, though I didn't tell her what happened until the day after. At that point, I still didn't understand what had happened. My mind wasn't developed enough to understand that what he did was unacceptable. After that incident, my mother never failed to keep me away from him at all costs. We never hung out anymore, and my toddler self had always wondered why. It wasn't when I started learning about all of it from my mother that I had finally understood. I was distraught. Ever since he became a teenager, he apparently has been getting involved in drugs and gang violence. He was never home and he was always under the influence. Knowing that now... I wonder if he was under the influence when he did that to me.

He was looking at me like a crazed animal. So maybe he was... but I will never know.

I'm just glad I ran away before he had the chance to do anything else. I'm glad I told my mother about it. I'm glad I was able to evade him.

He did all of that to me. To a toddler. To a child.

The second uncle: Summer 2023. My parents and I took a vacation together to our home country. It has been about 5 years since we came to the US. It was about time we finally came back home and reunited with our family. Even if that was only for a month. When we arrived at the house, we greeted everyone. Grandmas, grandpas, aunts, and uncles. But there was one uncle that stood out like a sore thumb. He came up to me and hugged me tightly. Then asked if I remembered or knew who he was.

To be honest, I didn't remember him at all and I was a bit embarrassed to tell him that. He just laughed it off and joked around and at that moment I felt like we would get along pretty well...

And I guess we did. I liked his company for a while. Whenever we went to places such as the beach, a park, the pool, or anything special, he would always be there. Always by my side...

Though I started noticing that he was becoming a bit touchy. Every now and then he would come up behind me and place his arms around me. Whether that was over my shoulders or around my waist and whenever he does, he always pulls me closer to him. He always just seems to want to touch me.

After a while, he started offering to take pictures of me whenever we were going places, his reason being so I would have "memories to hold on to". He guided me through the poses and occasionally would move my arms or my body around as if I was his little doll. At that point, I was a little uncomfortable... but I was still too blind to see what he was trying to do. Too blind to see that my trust shouldn't have been placed on him.

Looking back on all of those pictures, I became aware of how the poses looked from another perspective. Some pictures were too "showy". Specifically showing parts of my body I would have liked hidden. The more I scroll through the pictures, the more they get worse. The pictures become more and more revealing by every swipe. At this point, I started to become skeptical about this man. So I went to my mother to ask about her opinion on this matter.

That's when I found out that that man has been involved in violence such as these in the past. He was caught doing "stuff" to children. To minors. At that moment, all of my trust for him shattered. I made sure to stay away from him like he was an infectious disease. Like he was a beehive I had accidentally disturbed. Scared that he might come sting me. I started refusing his offers to take pictures, just saying that I was tired and just needed some rest. He never asked me anymore after that...

There were many more incidents like this that have happened to me. I end up trusting people who just end up hurting, scarring me, forever. I know who and who not to trust... but sometimes I can be too blind to see that the person who I shouldn't trust is right in front of me. That is and will always be my weakness.

Trust is the silver double-edged sword that  
protects you from anything in your path...

But be careful

Once broken

The shards of its once full body

Will come to cut you.

What is youth violence?

Youth violence can be a scary being. Any harm caused to a young individual would be considered youth violence. It can vary from physical harm, to mental harm, from bullying or abuse, from sexual violence or verbal abuse. It's like it can shapeshift. Sometimes you can't even spot that it is happening. Sometimes it can blind you without you realizing. In the article "Youth Violence" by the U.S. Department of Justice, the author states, "The term "youth violence" covers a broad spectrum of behaviors that can include fighting, bullying, and gang-related violence. Exposure to violence as a child can cause emotional and physical harm, including negative impacts on health and well-being that can follow a child into adulthood," (1). This just shows how broad the spectrum of youth violence is and how gravely it can affect children. Whether it was big or small it can still greatly impact their lives. It doesn't matter how much, how big, and how often the violence is being portrayed, it shouldn't be acceptable.

What are some causes of youth violence in your community?

There are many things that cause youth violence. Bad parental examples, peer pressure, social media, being under the influence of drugs, and poor emotional management are only a fraction of the many factors that cause youth violence. Though all of these have one thing in common, and that is it will always lead to someone getting hurt. It can be an inescapable disease that spreads throughout a community. One that might never fade away. Bad parents and peer pressure can cause a child to act a certain way. A child can feel pressured into doing something in worries of pleasing the people who pressured them. This can cause them to inflict violence into the community as a way of releasing their pent up emotions.

Social media is another cause of youth violence. Yes, it may seem like the only use for it is entertainment, but there is a lot more to it than that. There is one big factor to social media and that is people can choose to remain anonymous. It's practically a double edged sword. Being anonymous can help people but can also hurt them or others in many ways. People who remain anonymous receive the ability to bully others without the need to worry about their identity. Without them getting in trouble for it. This has been an ongoing problem ever since social media became popular and it just gets worse as time goes on.

Being under the influence of drugs, or being involved in gang related violence, can also be another big cause of youth violence as this can also lead to poor emotional management skills. When people get involved in these things, they tend to get a little overboard. They aren't able to think straight and that can lead to them accidentally letting out their anger or emotions on other people. This can also bring up the urges that have been bottled up inside them which can then lead to violence such as sexual harassment or assault.

What can you as an individual do to reduce youth violence in your community?

"Stand for what is right. Even if it means standing alone." — Suzy Kassem. This quote really stands out to me because it shows that if you feel that something isn't right, stand your ground even if it means doing it alone. I would also relate this quote to the quote, "If you see something, say something" because they both talk about standing up for what is right.

Sometimes youth violence can be hard to spot. Sometimes it is a little sneaky. But when you start noticing it happening, don't be afraid to do something. Whether that means standing up yourself, or telling an adult about it, never be hesitant to do what is right. You could have the ability to stop someone from inflicting violence onto another.

If the violence is being inflicted on you, then tell someone. Someone you know you can trust. Don't let the thick cloud of violence muffle your voice. Don't let it silence you. It will only get worse from then on. Your most powerful weapon in that situation is your voice. Tell someone and don't be afraid.

Samuel Rye – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy - Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen



Remember, even the smallest actions can make a big difference.

Youth Violence is something that unfortunately exists in our world. Youth violence doesn't just have one cause there are many causes as to how and why youth violence occurs. From gossip and bullying to abuse and suicide, these are just some of the reasons why youth violence exists and occurs in our world. I have unfortunately experienced youth violence myself and I will be telling a real story in my encounter with youth violence.

When I started Middle School I went to Draper Park Middle School and I had three friends who I thought were going to be my greatest friends. One day during sixth grade I was tossing a football with my friends at recess and one of my friends overthrew it and I went to get it back. A group of boys had the ball and I asked if they could give it back. They all looked at me and laughed. I didn't understand why they were laughing and then I realized they were laughing at my Denver Broncos sweatshirt. They didn't just make fun of me because of my sweatshirt, they also were laughing at me wearing glasses. After recess I had to ask to use the restroom because I felt so crappy about what they said to me I just had to cry it out. The worst part of that experience was that none of my friends even bothered to come over and back me up when I was getting bullied by the kids. I had never felt so weak and sad before. These groups of kids all through sixth grade kept bothering me every single day. It got to a point where I would just come home and cry in my room. I needed help and someone to talk to about that situation. My parents were well aware of what was going on and they tried to help me the best they could. I was able to get a school counselor to talk to about what was going on, but that did not make me feel any better because I was still dealing with the same thing everyday. Every morning when I woke up I was sad and unhappy. I had to go to school knowing that I was going to be bullied that same day. Some of the things that those kids said I will never forget. "Sam, you are a loser who has no friends." or "Sam you will never amount to anything in your pathetic life." Those words made me feel like no one loved me, no one liked me, and that no one had my back when I really needed it.

There was one kid in this boy group that was bullying me the most. This kid would harass me every single day I went to school. He would physically and verbally harass me. I needed help just to keep myself from being bullied and harassed by this kid. When I turned to my friends they never helped. All of my friends had ties with this kid whether it was being on the same football team as him or being an old friend. I was ganged up on every day and I had no one to even be there for me. Getting through sixth grade was very hard considering what I had put up with. During the summer my three friends promised that they would have my back when I needed it from now. When the summer had reached its end I was angry and sad because I had to start school again at the same school with the same kids that bullied me the previous year. Seventh grade had started and nothing changed. That kid who harassed me constantly last year was in my math class and there was nothing I could do about it. At this point he had started physically harassing me. During recess I didn't hang out with my friends anymore I played soccer with random people. One day I was playing soccer and the kid purposely followed me to the field and was pushing and tripping me. He pushed me on the ground and put me in a choke hold and I had to fight back. I was doing the best I could to squeeze out of the hold and hurt his arm. He quickly ran away once he saw the vice principal come over.

After that it was enough that the administration had not been giving me the help I needed and they had not been taking the right action in this situation. Me and my parents came to the conclusion that I would leave Draper Park Middle School and go to Summit Academy. I had told my three friends that I was moving schools and I got into a fight with them because they were mad that I told them that they never had my back. It was the truth. Even after starting my first two weeks at Summit Academy two of the three friends had started to cyberbully me. They had sent a text message saying a bunch of inappropriate and hateful words and after that I made sure that I had no contact with them ever again. The third friend was not a part of that text but I still parted ways from him. The causes of this youth violence was peer pressure, bullying, low self-Esteem and cyberbullying. My solution to this problem was switching schools and making sure that I had no contact with those three ever again.

How has youth violence affected my life?

Youth violence affected my social and mental health. Being harassed or ganged up on never felt good but the things that were said to me affected my mental health in a negative way. My social health was affected badly. When I had no friends to back me up it affected my social health because I didn't know who I could trust and if they would have my back.

What are the causes of youth violence?

In my experience the causes of youth violence were peer pressure, bullying, low self-Esteem and cyberbullying. My friends had to choose who they would be friends with, me or the bully group. No friends should ever have to choose. I was bullied by this popular boy group and the leader from that group harassed me the most. Between my friends and these bullies all of them had low self-Esteem. I was cyberbullied even by my own friends who sent an offensive message.

What can I do about Youth Violence?

There are many things I can do about youth violence. There are 3 big ways that I would handle youth violence. Communicating, talking to a trusted adult and always making sure that my friends will be there for me when I need them.

That was my experience with youth violence.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO

## Do the Write Thing



# State Finalists

*Ellie Anderson*

7th Grade, Vernal Middle School  
Teacher, Hannah Rich

*Jacee Babcock*

7th Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Anna McNamer

*Lucas Caldwell*

7th Grade, Vernal Middle School  
Teacher, Hannah Rich

*Ashe Cannon*

7th Grade, Butler Middle School  
Teacher, Anna McNamer

*Bailee Deets*

8th Grade, Uintah Middle School  
Teacher, Sarah Anderson

*Mckay Ellis*

8th Grade, Desert Hills Middle School  
Teacher, Hayley Pendleton

*Angel Fritz*

7th Grade, Highland Junior High  
Teacher, Keslie Memmott

*Kaitlyn Gwilliam*

7th Grade, Diamond Fork Middle School  
Teacher, Scott Tippetts

*Nipsej Henderson*

8th Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Linda Lujan

*Jayne Jensen*

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

*Emma Martinez*

8th Grade, South Sevier Middle School  
Teacher, Lesia Coe

*Yuridia Munoz Gasca*

8th Grade, Northwest Middle School  
Teacher, Linda Lujan

*Jeremy Nguyen*

7th Grade, Roy Junior High  
Teacher, Dustin Flores

*Presley Patterson*

7th Grade, Roy Junior High  
Teacher, Dustin Flores

*Jasmitha Perisami*

8th Grade, Summit Academy -  
Independence  
Teacher, Debra Wallace

*Rowan Pheysey*

7th Grade, Lehi Junior High  
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*Hannah Qureshi*

8th Grade, Summit Academy - Draper  
Teacher, Kim Arminen

*Cristian Scott*

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Teacher, Scott Tippetts

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8th Grade, Summit Academy -  
Independence  
Teacher, Debra Wallace

*Connor Teasdale*

7th Grade, Highland Junior High  
Teacher, Keslie Memmott

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Ellie Anderson – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Vernal Middle School – Teacher, Hannah Rich



### Youth Violence

Youth violence is so prevalent today in our world. What is Youth violence? According to Google, "Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24. It can include fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence." Homicide is the third leading cause of death for people ages 10-24. Each day, around 12 young people are victims of homicide and about 1,400 are treated in hospitals for nonfatal assault-related injuries. Youth violence is a major problem in our world today. One of the greatest causes of youth violence is social media. Youths spend many hours on social media reading and watching many different things. "In 2020, homicides spiked by 30% and fluctuated around that level for the next two years."(propublica.org) They often see only the "perfect" side of the person that is posting. It makes them feel not good enough and unaccepted. They can also see or watch things that make them angry and sad. Like comments, you can't control what other people say, so oftentimes rude or disturbing comments are made. The comments are hurtful, destructive, and shaming. They lose sleep over media because of stress or even just being on social media at night when they should be sleeping. This can make them more tired and hormonal. Media has a huge cause for youth violence. Another huge cause of youth violence is poor parenting and a bad home environment. Parents are an enormous influence on their child/children. Parenting sets an example, and that example can be good or bad. Youth's brains are still developing they take the environment and apply it to their life. Experiencing bad parenting, the youth will do as they have learned. Environment affects everyone in a major way. Youth need a good environment so they can stay positive. Someone once said, "You become what you surround yourself with. Energies are contagious. Choose carefully. Your environment will become you"-unknown. The sad thing is, is that not everyone gets to choose the environment that they live in. This is why we need to step up and create a positive environment whenever we can for everyone we can. Youth violence can affect anyone and everyone. Youth violence has personally affected me in my life. Youth violence has affected me in my life because there are sometimes fights in school and I have even experienced multiple gun threats. Not personally to me but to my school. This creates an unsafe and uncomfortable environment for the entire community not just the people who are threatened. Parents worry for their children's lives which creates a tense community, in which no one trusts each other. Youth violence affects everyone! Parents lose children, friends lose friends, and so many more people lose someone that matters to them because of youth violence. Youth violence needs to be prevented. There are many people out there who care. Our responsibility is to ensure that everyone knows someone they can reach out to. Be the person that someone can reach out to! Be willing to listen and help them. There are amazing apps out there that can help like Safe UT, Love is not Abuse, and many more. We need to let everyone know there are places to get help. If you suspect that anyone is thinking of harming themselves or anyone else tell someone that you trust immediately. Local police, counselors, trusted parents/adults, or anyone else that you trust that can help them. If you are that person who needs help know that there is someone out there who cares about you just need to reach out. It might not feel like it but you are loved and needed. Everyone must be willing to help anyone who needs it. It will help if you even just listen. "Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to change a person's life." - Unknown Sometimes we just have to be there for them. Violence is never the answer. Starting today stand up for yourself and others. Everyone needs a person to lean on. Be the person who saves a life.

Jacee Babcock – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Butler Middle School - Teacher, Anna McNamer



Being aware of Youth Violence

What are the causes of youth violence? Youth Violence has many causes, including being born with a developmental or personality disorder, use of illegal or addictive substances, and even unemployment. It is a big problem in today's society, especially for the new generations to come.

How has youth violence affected my life?

Youth violence is common in many communities, including Cottonwood heights, and I too have experienced it. Earlier this year, my best friend Leon got hit by a driver that was under the influence of illegal substances. This experience affected me and my friend's lives severely. He was a victim of youth violence, he is one out of very many, but he is not a statistic, he is Leon. His life, nor ours will ever be the same, I know it might be hard to empathize with a small statistic along with the millions of other victims, but his story should be told, remembered, and used to change the statistics, I don't want what happened to my best friend, to anybody else.

What can I do about youth violence?

Despite how it seems, we all can do something to stop or prevent youth violence, What i can do is spread awareness of Leon's story as well as the stories of others, to spread awareness of what happened, and hopefully show that these victims are people, not statistics. A word can change the world, and by sharing the word of these stories, the world could become a better place, for a new generation to grow up safer. There are many causes and many victims of Youth violence, what happened to Leon just happened to be one of them. He isn't any more, nor less important then the thousands of children and young adults who fell victim to youth violence.

Where am I confronted with youth violence?

I find myself approaching youth violence often, I have not only had an experience, but i have seen the experiences of others. My best friend had a very rough upbringing due to his stepdad. I watched that experience, watching him grow older and be mentally and physically affected by it, he was also falling victim to youth violence. He is in a much better place now, but i hope his story inspires.

CONCLUSION

Youth violence is sadly very common, yet barely talked about. Awareness is important for change, and change is important. These stories should began and continue to inspire, spread awareness, and stop reducing them to only statistics.

Lucas Caldwell – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Vernal Middle School – Teacher, Hannah Rich



## Do the Write Thing

Let's start with a story. I have two little brothers. They looked up to me when we were younger and still do. During that time, my father taught me one of the most influential lessons of my life, despite it being a little silly. That lesson was "Monkey see, monkey do". He often reminded me of this fact. Only now do I realize the importance of what he taught. Some days I would see my little brother do something that I didn't like, but when I went to my father about it, his only response would be "Monkey see, monkey do". After some reflection, I often realized that mere days before, I had done the exact same thing. He was just copying me. He saw me as an example and wanted to emulate me. This story leads into why youth violence occurs. This happens on a much larger scale, whether we realize it or not. Children act like their parents and friends act like their friends. We emulate those who are around us to fit in. And while the blame is not entirely on the parents, some of it falls to them. Examples in our lives are far more important than we realize. I think that youth violence occurs because of bad examples or simply a lack of a good example.

So just like any solution to a problem, you have to start at the roots. To kill a weed, it is not enough just to cut off the top. If you truly want to solve youth violence, or really any other problem, you also have to start at the root of it. As I mentioned before, examples play a large part in life. Take, for example, me. I am growing up in an incredible family, with incredible examples. My parents have always tried to be good examples. As a result of that, me and my siblings are good people. But when you don't have a good example or lack any example at all, you end up differently. And while this might not always be the case, I think that it is the cause of youth violence far more often than we realize.

And when we know what the cause is, we can get rid of the problem. We are the rising generation. If we take steps now to stop the problem, our children won't have those bad examples. But problems as large as this often take time to solve. Time that we may not have.

So let me ask you a question. What happens when we throw a rock, or even something as small as a pebble in a lake? Does it plop to the bottom with no effect? Or does it make ripples? One ripple turns into two, and two turns into 3, and on and on and on. One action can cause a multitude of events, no matter how small. Ripple effects don't just occur in nature though.

It happens in our everyday lives whether we realize it or not. When an influencer does something or wears things, it starts a ripple effect. People want to be like their idols, so they do or wear the same things. When that happens, the people who look up to them, often emulate them. And not just influencers. Most everybody has somebody that they look up to.

To stop youth violence, we must take the first step. We need to be better examples, and better people to stop this. We have to do it ourselves. Someone has to take this first step. If it is us, all the better. I will be an example, and encourage others to do the same. This starts with us, even though some of us have never experienced youth violence from any side, including me. That being said, Do the Write thing. Because if we don't start, who will?

**Ashe Cannon – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Butler Middle School – Teacher, Anna McNamer**



Do The Right Thing Essay:

The LGBTQ+ community has been targeted with violence for years. As a teenager who is part of the LGBTQ+ community I have been a target of youth violence. While in school I have been called names that are specifically targeted to be negative towards members of the community; this has resorted to people being relatively violent towards me because of my pronouns and name. Some religious students have used their religion as an excuse to be violent and to use cruel language towards me and other students in the community. I'm not alone in this because about 65 to 85% of queer students say they are bullied for their gender identity or sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup> In the face of this treatment, I am actively finding ways to build a community and find places where I feel free from youth violence, and I'd like to do more to make me and other queer students at Butler feel safe.

While attending events at Encircle I have noticed that it is a violence free space, they host friendship circles every Wednesday that I attend. They make the space inviting by adding lots of areas to sit down and feel comfortable. The space has lots of rooms that cater towards different moods. For example, during friendship circles they host group therapy in a small cozy room with big couches. At Encircle they also have small rooms for students if they need to take a break away from people if they are overstimulated or if they have a lot of emotion. During the group therapy, they talk about ways to avoid being in certain situations involving youth violence targeted towards queer people.

Recently I was given the opportunity to attend an event called TransFestival, it was a concert involving all members of the LGBTQ+ community sharing their music and eating food. This event focused on celebrating non-gender conforming people. There were speakers who talked about violence targeted towards them and their families. At these events it is a free and comfortable space for queer youth. I felt the same way when I attended the Utah pride festival. At the Utah pride festival you get to meet other people in the community or that share similar views of the world. In these environments I feel safe to express myself how I wish. The festival focuses on creating a safe space for the queer youth and making them feel comfortable within their identity.

At Butler they have a group for students in the community called "Rainbow Group". My plan for Butler is to try and make the group bigger so that it feels more like Encircle or any other safe space. I personally find it frustrating on how the school is not allowed to promote or talk about the group on the announcements. I think if we could talk about the queer population within Butler then we could make it feel like a safer space for the students in the LGBTQ+ community. I think that Butler should add lessons during Bruins Time about why you shouldn't be violent towards queer students and how it affects them mentally.

In conclusion, I think that from the good experiences I'm having in Encircle and concerts I am becoming a more powerful advocate for me and others in working against youth violence targeted towards queer youth.

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Bailee Deets – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Uintah Middle School – Teacher, Sarah Anderson



Youth is the world's future. We all know that youth might do things that they will regret such as youth violence. Youth violence, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is “the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24.” (“Preventing Youth Violence|violence Prevention|injury Center|CDC”). Youth violence affects everyone's lives whether they have lost someone or know someone who does youth violence. These next paragraphs will explain the leading reasons for youth violence, why people do youth violence, and how youth violence affects my life. There are many changes and causes of youth violence but the main one is toxic stress. As it says in, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “many risk factors for youth violence are linked to experiencing toxic stress, or stress that is prolonged and repeated. Toxic stress can negatively change the brain development of children and youth”. Kids today are always worrying about their appearance and are stressed about fitting in; sometimes I wish I could just tell these kids that people love and care about them and want to see them succeed no matter what they look like. But, they still have that stress, and social media does not help with that because teens wish they had what other kids have. Sometimes at that point, youth think that they have no worth and hurt themselves, which sadly sometimes leads to harm that can never be undone, such as suicide and/or drug overdose. That is why toxic stress is the leading reason teens commit youth violence. If I am being honest, I live in an amazing town full of amazing people. My family treats me well, and I do not come in contact with youth violence a lot. However, I would say that youth violence has affected my life because of how I see people treating others. I can look around at my school and see that there are different groups of people ( e.g., Emos, Furrys, Popular, Nerds, Quite), and if we do categorize people based on their appearance, a lot of the time they will get stressed and will most likely want to fit into their group which will lead to them having to do whatever there group does. As it says in (“Parent and Teen”), “At a time when teens are trying to figure out who they are and where they fit in, it is especially challenging for them to say no in uncomfortable situations or to go against their peer group.” (<https://parentandteen.com/what-teens-think-peer-pressure/>). This website helps support why being peer pressured into a categorized group can be so harmful because, once you know that you must be in this group and do what they do, you do it. You can see on people how dress and how their expressions are if they do youth violence. If they wear overly sized items that is most likely because they are hiding something that they are doing to their bodies. This affects my life because it makes me sad to know that there are kids my age hurting themselves. We can also see the effects of youth violence in non-fiction books. In my Language Arts class we are reading about the Holocaust and even back then we can see that kids were hurting themselves or being hurt. As it says in the poem “I Cannot Forget” by Alexander Kimel, “Children shaking like leaves in the wind... The pain of the ghetto, cuts like a knife....Hiding Children, dripping with fear.” ( Lines 3,11,17) This is showing the Nazis hurting and threatening children. To paraphrase one of my sources, youth violence is either children hurting themselves or other people hurting them (“Preventing Youth Violence| Violence Prevention| Injury Center|CDC”). During the Holocaust we can clearly see that youth violence was happening and continues today I don't know if youth violence will ever go away, but there are ways we can help prevent it. We might not be able to completely abolish youth violence, but we could slow or lessen its reach. At my school, we have a group called the HOPE squad and it helps and trains youth to know who might have youth violence and how to help prevent youth violence. As it says in “LAPD Online”, “Get involved to make school safer and better – having poster contests against violence, holding anti-drug rallies, counseling peers, and settling disputes peacefully”. (“Ten Things Kids Can Do to Stop Violence”).

According to this website, you can stop youth violence by addressing it to people you might see suffering from it, or just join a school/community group to help fight it. Now, I am not saying that you must join one of these groups to make a difference in the world. Small acts of kindness can go a long way. I say this out of the goodness of my heart, if you have a friend or know someone who is or who is thinking about doing youth violence, tell someone. But of course, not all of our combined efforts are going to stop youth violence because we can see it happened back in World War II, and I bet if we looked farther back we could still see it. We can always work to prevent violence against youth. First, the main thing I want to take away from this is that youth violence has been around forever and we might never stop it completely, but we can prevent it for some youth. Second, we can help prevent it by not judging people or being rude. Let's help prevent youth violence one child at a time.

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Mckay Ellis – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Desert Hills Middle School – Teacher, Hayley Pendleton



### My Guide to Banish Youth Violence

Life is hard; however, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Violence often affects people indirectly. I have experienced someone close to me committing suicide in my life. Nevertheless, there are many ways to escape the pit of despair. Youth violence often occurs through mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety): although, it may be prevented through service, therapy, and spending some time talking to others. Youth violence has a multitude of definitions. In “Youth Violence: What We Need to Know” by the National Science Foundation, the foundation states, “A comprehensive review of more than 381 effects from studies involving more than 130,000 participants around the world shows that violent video games increases aggressive thoughts, angry feelings, physiological arousal (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure), and aggressive behavior. Violent games also decrease helping behavior and feelings of empathy for others” (12). In my viewpoint, youth violence is when anyone who is younger than 18 gets hurt, physically or mentally by someone else. Youth violence doesn’t necessarily have to be large. Youth violence could be anything from throwing small insults to having physical fights. Sometimes mental disorders like anxiety or depression can provoke children to be violent. Youth violence often is directed at adolescents who are less social than others. As an older generation, we need to teach those younger than us that they should be wary of violence. During this school year (2023-2024,) I have been the subject of some youth violence. In the hallways, other kids in the school intimidate me to make me feel inferior. As someone who struggles with my emotions (mainly sadness), I have cried a couple of times this school year. My anxiety at times impacts my emotions because it wants me to be perfect: but, in reality, that is impossible. For example, in exploring technology, I accidentally snapped a piece of wood because I wasn’t being observant of my surroundings. I broke it while the teacher was giving instructions so everyone was in the same spot in the shop. As I could feel all eyes turning on me I was extremely embarrassed. I try my best to be careful but I am quite clumsy so I have many circumstances in which I have accidentally broken things. As said previously the main amount of youth violence I experience is from my brain. I have also accidentally broken my home’s thermostat. I am a curious person so I was thinking, “How does this work?” and I pulled off the cover. My parents were mad because, in the downstairs of our house, we couldn’t change our air conditioner for a little bit. Just as the 2023 school year was ending it felt as if my family was hit by a truck. My cousin was only a little older than me. He abruptly committed suicide. The devastation brought my whole family to tears, even those who are not as emotional as others.. My cousin seemed like such a happy guy without any stresses in the world but one day we just lost him. As I woke up I could sense distress within the house. I had no idea what was happening until my mom brought everyone into a family meeting. My mom told us the story. My uncle was called early in the morning to help clean up the scene. My cousin’s sister was devastated because she was the one who discovered the body and called 911. We got to read his suicide note not long afterwards. At the end of the note he said “Some of my favorite things: music, dirt biking, lifting, mountain biking, scuba diving, snowboarding, skiing, wakeboarding, slalom skiing, I’m obsessed with cars. I also love watching/playing sports. I love doing most things that are adventurous and outdoors. I know that God exists, and I will see you in Heaven.” Funnily enough, something that supports my emotions is serving others. Service does not have to be too much, it could be as simple as pushing your neighbour's garbage can out on garbage day. One of the easiest ways to serve others is by donating to good organisations. For example, popular YouTubers Mr. Beast and Mark Rober previously created Team Trees and Team Seas.

After Team Trees over twenty million trees have been planted for the charity! With Team Seas over thirty million pounds of trash will be removed from the ocean from the donations. All they asked for was a one-dollar donation for either one tree planted or one pound removed from the ocean respectively. I give this example because a lot of those who donated felt a lot better! Another thing that helps me is going to therapy! I know it can be scary but there are a lot of ways to attend! You could go in person, over video meet, call, or even text! I know this sounds like an advertisement but therapy genuinely helps! I used to be very anxious but therapy helped me build skills to be less anxious. I know that if my cousin went he would still be alive. No one would think poorly of you because you go to therapy. Finally, probably the most important and easiest way to help with emotions is talking with loved ones! In "Mental Health of Adolescents" by WHO, researchers said that "Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 7 10-19 year-olds experience mental health conditions" (3). The reason I included that certain quote is because it proves that you do have people who share similar problems with you. Even though everyone is different, chances are that there is someone you could talk to whom is close to you. This option is probably the easiest for most people because you don't have to worry about meeting someone new! Also, you don't have to be on the receiving end, you don't have to wait for them to ask you to talk with them. In synopsis, youth violence is a fairly deep subject. There are many crevices that monsters lurk in. To win the battle we must serve others, use therapy, and talk to loved ones. The monsters judge you and make you think poorly about yourself. Open your eyes, wake up, the monsters don't truly exist. Please help by raising others' emotions up so the monsters dissipate.

**Angel Fritz – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Highland Junior High – Teacher, Kelsie Memmott**



Youth violence affected my life when I was bullied. Last year I was bullied and called names. I thought about suicide many times. I would cry every night. I got diagnosed with depression and bipolar. I would yell and hit people. I would give attitude and be mean. The way that bullying made this happen was people being mean and calling me names and pushing me. There were many times I got threatened to be jumped and stuff like that. It made me feel insecure and upset about how I looked. I would wear makeup and do my hair differently before I would wear masks and beanies because I didn't like the way I looked. My hair was dead and falling out. I cut it every day. I remember laying on my floor to be outside and laughing with my friends. Nobody knew how bad I was getting. I was alone and had nobody to talk to. My friends dropped me and my mom was upset with me. My grades were all Fs and Ds. I could always talk to the teachers but I was too scared if I said something my mom would know. I cared about my mom a lot if she was crying id comfort hr and if she was sad id do something to be better for her i didn't have a phone so i was surviving off my Chromebook and i never went outside i was always inside everyone at the school hated me and didn't want to be around me ii was the “emo”. I stopped eating and drinking water. I would get home, eat and go to bed. I wouldn't do my chores. I would yell and scream. I'd slam doors and laugh when I was getting yelled at. I would punch things. I would hit my sisters. I would stay in my room and never come out. I couldn't see my floor because it was covered in stuff. I wouldn't do my chores. That's how teen violence affected my life. You can tell a teacher. You can send an anonymous tip. You can tell an adult. You can also tell your parents and teachers if this is happening to you plz get help and talk to someone if you can't trust anyone call/text 988 it's a suicide hotline and would help you.

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



Violence is around us, we see it every day,  
It's too big to ignore so we must say.  
It happens in our daily lives, it must be stopped.  
Let's work together to get violence dropped!  
When I see it in the school halls, it makes me mad.  
For some it makes them scared, and even sad.  
Look what we have come to, kids hurting one another.  
We need to stop this, let's love each other!  
Even if we're different, we need to let it slide.  
In the end we can say at least we tried.  
When people hurt each other it makes me upset,  
If you have gone through this I hope you can reset.  
They hurt each other because they contrast.  
When they don't think and they don't ask, things get bad fast.  
They think they're better than another one.  
They don't think about it until they feel they've won.  
Sometimes they see them as competition,  
Then they want to fight back for that top position.  
We can band together, let's slow this down!  
But it will be hard, so come, let's gather round.  
Some people won't change but hear me out please.  
We've gotta do it, with or without ease.  
Be nice! It can make a huge change in someone's life! Every  
action though it might seem very small,  
It can benefit somebody; not make them fall.  
When people get hurt, they can have dark thoughts,  
Sometimes they wonder if they can make it across!  
The suicide rates shoot up to the sky  
Most times they don't think right and think that they should  
die.  
So please reach out and stop all this madness.  
Try to stop, the world will be a place of gladness!  
Do it! Say nice things, compliment others!  
Do this and trust me, let's get out of this thunder.  
Let's work together and make this world shine!  
If we try hard enough we can break this thick line.  
We can change the world but it will be hard.  
Save the people who feel like they are behind bars.  
Sit by people, you can do that, be proud!  
Though you might seem different, away from the crowd,  
You can do it and not be so upset.

If you do that you will not be seen as a threat.  
Be nice, stop trying so hard, go with the flow.  
If we break the tide then we can grow!  
Do it! Do it even if it makes you unique!  
You can do it! Nobody will critique!  
I hope this poem has helped you see what this world needs.  
We need to change, stop spreading this disease.  
Let's be kind and make youth violence drown.  
Let's do it together, let's do it now. Help me take bullying down!

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



The Problem is Not as Big as It Seems

How has Youth Violence affected my life? When I was 6-8, I was bullied, for about 2 years. Even though I did not know how to fight or defend myself in any type of way. Alabama was very rough time for me because, I would be jumped, beat up, and even to the point when almost got stabbed. Growing up I figured I should defend myself so I would not get beat up again. I was scared cause I was beat up so bad I was even rushed to the emergency room. My parents would ask me to tell what happen, but I never did. I was scared we might move again. It happened to me a bunch of times so I was scared and embarrassed that my family would like me. But later in my years I taught myself how to fight and not to get beat up ever again. By the time I was 9 years old I was overly cautious of who I was spending time together with or even around me. I always lived by a quote, "Never give up. Never stop believing. Victory is always possible for the person who refuses to stop fighting." My father told me this quote after I came out of the hospital. Then moments affected me but still did not stop me from doing me. For me I choose the people they do not choose me. Life is like a circle one wrong move and the circle messes up. What are the causes of youth violence? The causes of youth violence could be like, bullying, fighting, self-harm, getting abused and many more. Having to go through youth violence or even doing I. It can or will emotionally scar you and others. Youth violence can also lead others in harm themselves or others in many ways. I did not really notice the causes of youth violence and how it can affect anyone and how bad it can hurt. This can danger many kids and others in life. Me and others want others to know about youth violence and how it affects others and give someone some help in hand. Kids should express there feeling with them that is going on in their life. What can we do about youth violence? What to do about youth violence if it can be hard. Youth violence can be extremely hard to deal with like telling someone about your situation. People need to go somewhere or even do something that makes you happy or comfortable in your situation that you are going through. To start you should tell a grown up or even someone you trust in your life. You should tell someone at one point cause if you do not then things might continue. I am saying this cause it happened to me and it is because I did not tell anyone, and the thing kept on happening to me. I end this essay saying do not hide your thoughts or feelings because I do not want anyone to go through anything I went through. So, tell people what you are going through in life so they can help you whenever you need it in life.

Jayne Jensen – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
South Ogden Junior High - Teacher, Kim Irvine



a sad generation with happy pictures

As I looked down at the black hole sucking my life away, I clicked into my doom and started scrolling and scrolling and scrolling my life away looking at the things I never had and all the things I could never do, it started eating at my confidence bit by bit. Until I heard the light of music saying “This is my fight song, Take back my life song ,Prove I'm alright song ,My power's turned on ,Starting right now I'll be strong.” as I reached up into the light I was pulled out word by word helping me realize where I was and this little push got me out and I realized this was not the life I want to be living, I sat there staring realizing I wasted all my time in this little box, blocking out my family and friends and I new what I had to do.I finally clicked delete. As soon as I lifted my finger a heavy burden of always being at my best was lifted and I could finally breathe while tasting the freedom as I realized that social media was no longer taking my life away.

Youth violence is the media influence. In today's world the internet and technology and especially social media is all around us, there can be advantages of having access to so much but it can also have a very negative effect, one of the biggest things is social media which is also a big effect on the youth. This can be a super bad way of youth violence because on social media there are many bad things and bad messages where people can post whatever they want. This also means that influencers and people close to youth can post about their lives and they wont want to post about the bad parts of their lives so they just post all the good things like pretty pictures of them self and vacations they go on etc, this makes it so youth and pretty much anyone can grow self hatred because they see what other people have and reflect on what they don't have and their mental health starts to drain until they can have long term effects like depression self harm and even suicide. This is why I think youth violence in the media influences.

I think that the social media influence on parts of youth violence is not the same as it was in the past and it is especially bad today. I think this because in the past youth did not have access to so much in just a small thing like a phone, and they still were impacted by the media from thing like magazines and advertisement but in today's world it is so much worse because we can be constantly looking at things that can make are metal health drain. So in conclusion, youth violence especially the effect of social media, is getting worse and worse over time if we don't act now to stop this.

Youth violence is caused by social media. When youth are constantly looking at social media they are always seeing things like people who appear to be better than them or prettier than them but in reality those people are not sharing the whole story and their struggles so the viewers start to grow self hatred and lots of insecurities. - Steven Furtick once said “The reason we struggle with insecurity is that we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else’s highlight reel.” I think this is a very real quote because we get our insecurities because we compare are lows with other highs instead of comparing are highs with their highs which make us seem like we are not good enough but we need to remember that they are not showing the whole story and since we have no idea what could actually be going on we can't compare yourself to them. This is why youth violence is caused by social media.

To stop youth violence I can do many things, one thing I can do is spread awareness to my peers by telling people around me and one big thing I can do to spread awareness is instead of posting things that would make youth insecure and feel bad about how they look and what their life is compared to what they see, I can post things like uplifting messages and realistic posts about my life that will show them that they are not alone and since I put these messages on the internet they will be very long lasting and people can be helped from all the way around the world for years to come. Another thing I can do to stop youth violence is when I notice someone who is struggling I can tell a trusted adult and get them the help they need from the effects of social media. Those are the main things I can do to prevent and stop youth violence caused by social media.

Youth violence is social media eating up our time  
And our brains being fried  
Youth violence is jealousy  
And those terrible melodies  
Youth violence is negative comments  
And not a single compliment  
Youth violence is comparing yourself to lies  
And our never ending cries  
Youth violence is social media

**Emma Martinez – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**South Sevier Middle School – Teacher, Lesia Coe**



Why Youth Violence is Bad  
For The “Do The Write Things” challenge

Youth Violence is a topic that most would just push aside and think that it will never happen to them or someone they know because they think that everyone is trustworthy. Well, the truth is that anyone could have experienced or have seen youth violence sometime in their lives. I have been a victim of it, and I sure have seen it too. Here are some of my stories:

This one is short but at the beginning of first grade I was just sitting at the edge of the sidewalk and my “friend” came up to me and said the saddest thing I have ever heard. She said, “This year I don’t want to be friends with you,” and then she just left.

I haven’t talked to her ever since and every year she just got meaner and meaner so I just don’t talk to her at all. Well, she does talk to me just not always nice, but this one time she did come up to me and ask me if she looked good which was weird but at least it wasn’t mean.

Here's another story: One day in third grade, I was just minding my business when I saw two kids fighting. They kicked, hit, punched, and even bit each other. Soon, one of the boys started bleeding and crying while the other laughed at him. After a short minute, another kid came to break them up, but the one laughing started beating him up for some reason. After another minute, a teacher came and took all three of the boys to the principal's office.

I don’t know what happened after that but I heard that the first two kids were twin brothers and they got expelled for 2 months. I don’t even know how they started fighting in the first place but all I know is that it happened. The reason I did nothing about it was that I was afraid that I would get hurt. Don’t be like me and go stop people if they are bullying others like that one kid. Go tell a teacher, a trusted friend, a counselor, or a parent if you are you see someone get bullied.

This is why you should check on your kids and make sure that they don’t watch violence because if they watch it all the time, then they might think that it's normal to hurt someone. They shouldn’t be seeing it as normal they should see it as bad. Make sure your kids aren’t seeing it as normal because they could end up hurting someone or maybe even themselves. We should do something about it to make sure that no one gets hurt.

Now here are the questions:

1. How Have You Been Affected by Youth Violence: I have been affected by youth violence by kids in elementary school. Not all but some of them are super rude and violent. Some just have been mean to me, and they treat me like a five-year-old. They don’t do it anymore but I still remember.
2. What Are The Causes of Youth Violence: Some causes of youth violence are movies, other kids, parents, and video games. You should check on what your child is watching or playing.

3. What Can You Do: What I can do about it is just not have little kids watch or play violent things. I can also help someone who has been a victim of it and play with them or just talk. If they are older I can tell a teacher and they can see what's wrong.

This type of stuff is happening all over the world and one person can't do it by themselves. Everyone needs to join in and help with youth violence and help people who have been dealing with youth violence too. We need to step up and stop this.

**Yuridia Munoz Gasca – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan**



A Person Can Change.

Hundreds of people's lives are affected by an act of violence. An act known as "youth violence." Now what is youth violence? It is mostly an act of harm, violence, and crime amongst the youth. Among the ages 10-27. Examples of youth violence are bullying, name calling, teasing, cyber bullying, etcetera. Youth violence is caused by a person who tries to harm you or lower your self-esteem. This act of violence spreads among people very quickly, inspiring other people to cause youth violence as well. It is an act that results pain and deathly injuries, putting someone through this can affect them emotionally, verbally, or physically, it can affect somebody to the point where they think they are not needed in this world or do not believe they even have a purpose in this world. That is how youth violence can affect somebody's life. A youth homicide that many get killed or injured in. There are several types of youth violence. For example, Abuse. Child abuse or sexual abuse. And there are also several types of bullying. Cyber bullying or name calling. Abuse can affect people giving them loads of trauma making them scared and start youth violence. Yes, cyber bullying can affect someone. People will think it is stupid being affected online. Though it can happen. Somebody can go online and start rumors, posting pictures of you, and talk badly about you online. A place where everybody can see it.

I have not yet experience youth violence myself, though I am scared that it will happen to me eventually. This is how youth violence affects me. It scares me that many people go through this act of violence and are now mainly traumatized by it. I can only imagine the type of pain, injuries, and suffering that, that a person goes through when experiencing youth violence.

Youth violence does not just happen for no reason, there are so many causes for it, it is caused by somebody who was either verbally abused in the past or because they witness this type of violence around them. Inspiring them to do violence themselves. An act of violence like this is also caused by a person who has a substance of use. Meaning one has a use of alcohol, drugs, or weapons. One may use the weapon for gang related activity. There are other causes to youth violence. Such as one who developed aggressive behavior in early childhood., influenced by people around them, or affected by a health problem. Violence amongst the youth is caused by somebody who suffered traumatic things in the past. Thus, saying that the person who was traumatized in the past wants nothing more than to be cared for or loved. Though once that person receives that, since they are unfamiliar with it, that person would find it odd and weird that they begin to grow suspicious that they then feel the need to start the violence since they are not used to it. Although, many people start youth violence by the community or neighborhood they lived in.

If you really want to know how to stop youth violence, there are a couple of ways. For starters, if you or someone else is getting bullied, use your voice. Stand up for you or the other person who was being bullied or attacked. Being made fun of or mistreated is not fun. So, use your voice and try to stop youth violence. Another way to stop youth violence, is to be a friend. That is, it. Just be a friend towards that someone who is causing this violence. Only try to understand what their past life was like, talk to them about why they are causing violence to others. Talk to them and figure out how to raise their confidence. Understand their story. Help study their behavior and help them quit youth violence.

Jeremy Nguyen – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Dustin Flores



### Do The Write Thing

What causes youth violence For me what caused my bullying was my parents getting a divorce. My dad hasn't had a job for 3-4 years, which caused my mom to get a divorce with him. He also told my mom that he was paying the home bills but wasn't, when we went to go get the taxes done, my mom finally found out that he hadn't been paying the rent. Then a couple months later we then next got evicted. After they got divorced, my dad kept using my moms card, on cigarettes and other stuff . I'm pretty sure, he thought it was monopoly money. Then we moved to my uncle's house, and had to live in 2 rooms. My dad on the other hand started going up in the mountains with my grandpa every weekend, sometimes even longer. My mom now has to work every single day of the week for 10 hours a day, sometimes longer to pay off her debt my dad caused . I now have lost the connection between me and my dad. How have I been affected by youth violence When I was in 7th grade me and some of my friends bullied a certain somebody. Let's call him X. Whenever we saw X at lunch we used to call him names like cheese burger. Also Whenever he just wanted to play soccer or 4 square, we would steal the ball or bother him. But near the end of the school year, we took it too far. It ended up becoming physical. We used to slide tackle him, and kick him. Sometimes get in fights with him. But one day, one of my friends slid him on the pavement, and ended up making him bleed a lot. The next day he didn't show up to school. No one got in trouble because, we got a whole bunch of people to say that X started it, so when the school looks at the ratio of 10:1. The school would obviously choose the higher number. But because X was bleeding and the school believed X started it, the school got both of them in trouble, even though Noah did nothing wrong. The reason I did it was because, hate. All that was happening at home, ended up making me build up hate inside, and I took it out on X. What can we do about youth violence We can show kindness to everybody, and make sure if they wanna talk about anything. We could also create a quote about doing " 1 act of kindness a day can make anybody's day". We should also keep our eyes out for any youth violence and stop it. In Conclusion let's just stop spreading hate and violence if it was ever that simple.

Presley Patterson – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Dustin Flores



Tears Falling

Pain

Abuse

Harassment

Bullies

**Everywhere.**

Yesterday,

Today,

Tomorrow,

Always?

Do you want your children to grow up like this?

What's next?

What happens now?

Will it ever stop?

No.

Not unless we change things.

**We** have to change things.

Bullies are silver snakes slithering to you. Picking you out of a crowd.

Twisting themselves around your neck, Choking you.

Stopping you from saying anything.

Holding tight until their poison seeps in.

The result of this behavior **cannot** be a reward.

This violence is like a storm.

Raging wild and causing destruction. Lightning flashing, rain pouring.

My tears falling rapidly.

It stops here.

Now.

With us.

With **you**.

We must represent peace and joy.

Not aggression and violence.

We can't fight fire with fire,

The flame will only **grow**,

And continue to burn people.

Then we'll be the snakes.

We need better.  
Our world deserves better.  
Our world deserves peace.  
We need safety.  
The violence **must** end.

Our example is the most important thing.  
Our positive influence will make a difference,  
The difference that **desperately** needs to be made.

I have personally been a victim of the violence we must rid the world of. I understand the issue, but you don't have to have been a victim to know that we need safety and the violence must end. Today's youth are our future. They will be our government, our teachers, our leaders, and our doctors, don't you think we should take care of them? It has been proven that youth and children who grow up being victims of violence and are exposed to violence are six times more likely to be violent themselves than those who haven't. This needs to stop. A change has to be made to end this vicious cycle.

People may always be violent and we might not be able to change that, but we can change the way we respond to it. People should not be rewarded for their violent actions and we can't give them attention because that is what they are seeking, if they get the attention they will get their reward and nothing will change. They'll become winners in this horrible game and we'll just be their pawns. What we need to do is represent peace and joy. Ron Paul said, "Setting a good example is a far better way to spread ideals than through force of arms." We cannot fight fire with fire, we have to put the flames out.

Many people feel hate burning inside them after they have been a victim of violence or someone they cared about has been a victim of violence, I am no exception. I held grudges for years for some of the people who have bullied me, but I'm finally starting to let go. After taking a step back and really looking at the situation I felt ashamed and embarrassed for keeping it this long. I'm learning to forgive and I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my chest. I've had to deal with the emotional pain of being bullied and the nights of crying myself to sleep, and then I had to deal with the weight of a grudge. Holding a grudge doesn't do you any good, you're not going to feel superior or better about yourself. You'll feel guilt and anger weighing down on you. Red hot anger coursing through your blood and dark gray guilt blinding you are not enjoyable feelings.

### Agony

It's a terrible feeling,  
Walking on eggshells around someone,  
And thinking you're the horrible one.  
Living in agony.  
The salty flavor in your mouth,  
From the tears,  
From the fear.  
Living in agony.  
The burning anger,  
The hatred,  
All for them.

Living in agony.  
Scared to be yourself,  
Fear of being attacked,  
They made you this.  
Living in agony.

We all want to be loved and accepted, we don't want to be living in agony. We all deserve to feel safe and be ourselves no matter the audience. Youth violence degrades this ability. Because of youth violence, there are people all over the world around the ages of 15-29 who are constantly watching their backs, never feeling like they can be themselves, living in agony. Sixty percent of our world's population has suffered from youth violence in one form or another. Do you think this number is acceptable? I don't.

I need you to help make a difference and help stop the tragedy of youth violence. Your example could be the difference. The peace that you represent can and will help stop this. It will take everyone, all of us working together, to bring a change. The difference that needs to be made can be made in our communities and our homes. It starts with us.

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



Silenced

“Silence creates its own violence” says book author of Annihilation, Jeff VanderMeer. This quote takes a special place in my heart, and I want to use this as an opportunity to spread the message. I was always considered a quiet kid for my age, no doubt about it. One of the perks of being reticent was that you tend to pick up things that other people miss, like the way someone twitches their nose when they lie, or when somebody likes to laugh more when nervous. Although there is one thing that I never seem to fail at seeing, the reactions on people’s faces when experiencing violence. The first glance of shock and loss of speech, the visible tears hanging by a thread, it pains me to even see a glimpse of this happening. It only hurts me more to see it occur to kids, knowing it would stick with them for a long time. Youth violence is a serious issue that will never stop.

“Youth Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24” says the organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What do you think of when you hear youth violence? The thought of bullying would come to mind for most people, even though that is a form of youth violence, there is way more to that than typical bullying. There are countless reasons as to what causes youth violence, but it all connects to the environment and media. Kids are influenced by what they see, and violence in kids can go deeper than the depths of the sea. They were raised to be drowned in an ocean of toxic waste, and the only way for them to gasp for air was to inflict the repressed emotions to those they envy, or deem weak. Reasons may also be because of a home filled with sexual, verbal, and physical abuse. The fist that strikes the face, is the same fist that strikes the soul. The meaning of violence does not occur to them, for they were raised to be taught it was right.

Every single human has or will experience youth violence, or at least be exposed to it. My personal involvement with youth violence includes a time in sixth grade, I was about eleven years old. I was in my room and doing the things a normal pre-teen would do, and I remember always getting annoyed whenever my dad would come inside and lay in my bed. My dad would call his friends in the middle of the night and it just bothered me the fact that he was just inside my safe space. Respectfully, I asked him to leave because I was sleepy and I did not want to hear him loudly blabbering on the phone. Fortunately he would move someplace else, but there were times where I had to beg for him to get out. Until this one particular night, he would continue his routine and I really had to convince him to leave this time, but he would just disregard my wishes. I was already in a bad mood so I gave up and just hopped into my parents’ bedroom to sleep there instead. I then noticed my mom sleeping, and I had this idea to get her to tell my dad that he should lay in her room instead. I woke up my mom but I could not help but burst into tears, I only knew so much after all. I was tired of having to tell my dad over and over again and this was the one night where he really drove me towards the edge. My sleep deprived mom had no sense other than to comply and call my dad over. I was nervous to see his reaction, considering that I basically avoided him and was tearing up over something so small. His footsteps grew louder and as he entered the room with me and my mom, he did something unexpected. He got into a large angry fit and started to yell at me, which caught me off guard since it seemed ridiculous of how upset he got. Bottles were thrown and hands were raised, I ran into the bathroom in search of some sort of protection. Saving some details, I shut my eyes and felt a painful pressure that struck my head. At that moment, my mind went blank and I had nothing to do but just stand there like a wimp. It was just so shocking that my own father would want to do that, it completely changed my perspective of him. I could not sleep that night, it was hard for me to process what had happened.

After a week of the incident, I decided to hang out with a friend so I could get my mind off of things. My friend, she was one of the sweetest people in the world and also dealt with heavy stuff. Me and her were playing a game on the Nintendo Switch and I kept losing. I got a bit annoyed and at the time I did not know how to handle my emotions.

As I gained one more loss, out of anger I raised my hand at her. I paused. The exact same hand that was raised like my father's. It was heartbreaking, and I could tell I was letting my father's actions consume me. I saw my friend's eyes widen and I could tell she was speechless, she had the same reaction as me before. I let out an exhale and slowly lowered my fist. I never physically harmed her, but that was definitely one of the biggest reflections I witnessed. I never made a mistake like that again. I still feel guilty to this day, but she says that she doesn't even remember. She probably wanted to make me feel better, but I remember, It was the longest minute of my life.

Youth violence will never stop. Youth violence is a cycle of constant hatred, and only will be passed on to later generations. It may seem cruel or disappointing to say, but it cannot be helped. People can die from only each other, and the same goes for people in the future. There is no guarantee that it will get better, but we could only hope for a better change. There are small things you and I can do to stop future violence for other people, but there are just some things that are too complicated to fix, and unfortunately would contribute to an endless cycle. There are ways to heal so that you can prevent this violence, but completely putting a stop to youth violence is impossible. Throughout my life, I just figured it'd be easier to just stay quiet. When I see kids going through some of the toughest times, I could only see myself in them. I am determined to spread awareness, and try to guide kids who are like me to peace. It is far from easy, but I know they can endure this with time and patience. I will use this as an opportunity to finally have a voice. I may be quiet, but I will never be silent.

Rowan Pheysey – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Lehi Junior High – Teacher, Chancellor Carter



**Experiencing Youth Violence, It's Not Just a  
Headline**

A Short True Narrative

A new school year was on the horizon. I, Rowan, was just entering a new school, a new era of my life. On the Lehi Junior High campus, the September heat was blowing through the air, as I stood around desperately trying to fit in with my friends. My whole life I've felt it as a hassle to try and make friends. Some people complained my style was scary, my art was confusing, and I just wasn't good enough.

Though out of the blue a new person came up to me, I wasn't sure exactly how to react when this person wanted my phone number. They thought that I was cool, and seeing as my previous year of school I had attracted some not vastly fantastic friends, I gleefully typed in my digits on their phone.

Little did I know what the consequences of that would be.

Later that day, I was sitting at my brother's tennis game, laying in the grass; soaking in the blissful breeze. Ding, my phone had a new notification. Scrambling to pick up my phone I checked my messages and saw a text from my new friend! For the sake of privacy, and for the sake of this story, we're going to call them Red.

"Hello!" the gray cloud on my screen read.

I'm not a very talented texter, but I tried to respond casually with a, "Hey!"

For the next hour or so, I wandered around the grass, concrete, and black tar, not paying attention to anything around me. I stared at my phone, the blue light tingling in my eyes. But none of that mattered, the endorphins from having a new friend were delightful. It was the most joy I'd had in a long time.

"I really want to cuddle right now," Red typed in.

Blanking, staring at the message, I questioned if this was aimed in a weird way. Surely this person didn't want to take things to a new level after literally knowing me for less than 5 hours!

"I just want to go to sleep right now," I awkwardly responded. Did I say the right thing, was I avoiding their text, am I just a horrible texter? Questions ran through my head faster than me driving off a cliff in a driving simulator.

On the way home from my brother's tennis game, I was uncomfortable texting anymore. This issue isn't aimed at anyone, but just because I have a very tiny amount of time I can talk to somebody before getting completely exhausted. I stared at my phone for a minute, wondering if I should make an excuse for my absence. But instead I typed in, "I gtg byeeee"

One night, I was on Facetime, later than I should've been up. The bluelight from my screen burned my eyes, and my body started to begin to go into sleep mode. But as I was planning to go to sleep, and leave the call, Red refused to let me leave. Saying things like,

"If you go I'm going to die,"

"Don't leave, that's rude to me,"

"Please stay on call, I just want to spend time with you."

Even though all it took for me to leave was to press the little button on my screen, I was afraid that Red would not be delighted with me, or Red might do something harmful to themselves or others around them. For context, in a previous Facetime, Red had been aggressively stabbing their pillow,

it set off an alarm in my body. Weight hunched on my shoulders, as it seems like a pretty reasonable idea to get some sleep, but if harm were to come involving red, the guilt would cause me to never sleep again! To my advantage, Red fell asleep so I left the call quietly, my mind relieved; and I could finally get a whole 2 hours of sleep!Yippee.

Maybe a day or two later, time doesn't make sense, anyways but I was at lunch and Red and I were just sitting on the grass. Ending lunch, the bell rang and I stood up to scurry through the crowd of students and to my next class, though Red wanted to just hug me. Although I knew that Red might have more abhorrent intentions, as when we were hanging out two days ago, they had pinned me to a wall and said "Dang, I really want to kiss you right now." I had to crawl under their arms to get out of that skin crawling Moment.

"I need to get to class," I explained.

"Come on, just hug me real quick before you go?" Red whined.

"But the crowd is thickening, can I just go?"

"Just hug me."

So I closed in a discernible uncomfortable hug, but Red lunged towards me into a kiss, tightening their grip around my back and preventing me from leaving. Red's height and body mass was a lot more than me, and so I had no strength to escape. Heart thumping in my chest, I backed away.

"Please no!" Though Red acted as if they were unable to accept the fact that I did not want to hug them, still they grabbed me towards their body and forced me to kiss them on the lips.

Gross, horrid, nasty, vulgar, scandalous! All of these words rang through my head, not directed at Red, but blaming myself. My face is nauseating, my lips are foul, and my mind is rancid. Why? The herd of students walking inside, I felt my body melting into the sidewalk. Please, don't let people see me in this light, I don't feel comfortable with this, it feels yucky in my thoughts, my speedy racing thoughts. Everything ran through my head at lightning speed, but the only discernible thing I could feel was guilt and disgust.

Everything around me started to feel funky, it's difficult to describe how I felt after that, it happened three times before I told somebody. Luckily I was only friends with Red for a week. Although the friendship did not last, the stalking from Red, the anxiety, and the hardships of making good friends after going through this distrustful, violating, and stressful friendship went on longer and further beneath the surface of myself. This assimilation of words tells my story, but millions of people have unfortunately been subjected to similar experiences of abuse and violence.

Last year, in 7th grade, this happened to me at my school. Parents, teachers, faculty, schools, districts, states, and countries (so many people) everywhere wonder how we can alleviate harassment at school? How can you keep everyone safe and respected when some people out there have a poor mindset?

What Do We Do About This?

Answering These Questions

### **- What are the causes of youth violence in and of itself?**

There are many causes of youth violence, it's hard to keep up with the grand number of things. I personally think that so much of youth violence is in the environment that the person has experienced in the past like their upbringing, and the environment they are currently in. Many people don't get to live on the poster picture for a city, they live lives that you may not know anything about.

Not everyone gets lucky with their life, and for some people it is harder to be positive when one is surrounded by the negative. Although that is no excuse for any act of violence, I think that with many different people from different backgrounds coming together is a phenomenal thing, but many people do not understand the things everyone goes through in their life.

According to the World Health Organization, some risk factors for a person within their family and environment include, "poor monitoring and supervision of children by parents, harsh, lax or inconsistent parental disciplinary practices, a low level of attachment between parents and children, low parental involvement in children's activities, parental substance abuse or criminality, parental depression, low family income, unemployment in the family, associating with delinquent peers and/or gang membership" ("Youth Violence"). Phew, that is a lot of things! But I think that the environment you are in, as well as other factors, start to make the child feel more negative, and then they go to school and project that negativity onto others. I believe that Red did not have any harmful intentions, but they did do things that are harmful, and we need to teach people that the violence they see at home is not a standard for a relationship.

When a young person is exposed to adversity behavior from people around them, parents, neighbors, schoolmates, anyone, can affect their wellbeing and their understanding of interactions between people. The US Department of Justice backs up my claim by saying, "Research suggests that these forms of exposure to violence during childhood increase the risk of violent behavior during adolescence by as much as 40 percent" ("Environmental Factors Contribute to Juvenile Crime and Violence (From Juvenile Crime: Opposing Viewpoints, P 83-89, 1997, A E Sadler, ed. -- See NCJ-167319," D S Elliot). The article shows that growing up in more difficult environments can lead to less opportunities for good, and can show more opportunities for violence. The circle of this violence keeps going, and how can we stop it? Or at least how can we try our best to stop it?

#### **- What can I/Us do about youth violence?**

Youth Violence seems to be a cycle, somebody gets hurt, and so they continue to spread that negativity while not knowing how deeply it affects themselves and others, and people spread that onto others, and it often ends up ending on youth. The topic of youth violence is not black and white, it is the whole freaking rainbow! Going into the roots of these things are involved with socioeconomics and the disadvantages that come with it, which, generally speaking, cannot be erased in a capitalist society. The roots of violence are so messy, but how can we improve the thoughts and mindset of people who commit acts of youth violence. And how can we make an impact to stop it, how can I make an impact to stop this cycle of just blatant and non blatant distress!

Well if we go to the roots of where this violence comes from, it comes especially from the environment, and the people you are raised around, and the damaging experiences that you've gone through during your childhood and childhood development as I explained above. Now you cannot get rid of class, and you cannot get rid of violence as a hole. There will always be certain things in a community that are virtually impossible to eliminate, we can't exactly change every damaging parent to be positive!

Though after giving this some thought, and reading some things, I have come up with some actions that we can try and implement in our communities. (These solutions aren't for one specific part of youth violence, but spreading harm in any shape or form as a whole. These solutions are not meant to solve the deeply rooted causes of youth violence, but to help bring people together to be more kind despite the causes of youth violence, and the distress they have witnessed.)

- I really think that we can do a lot with anti violence courses and talks at school, but I think that if we got a group of actual teenagers together, and some adults, we could create a course that would work. As a person who has sat through a lot of those talks, I think they are nice, but then after lunch everyone decides to make fun of the lessons.

“Ooh ahh I’m going to punch you and then post a mean tweet!” Stuff similar to that. This is sort of a random idea, but I believe that with more teenagers involved, you can get a better consensus on what would actually work, there is psychology involved and not just saying “be nice” will work for everyone.

- I also think that we need to figure out what lessons work in the long run for students. Maybe people will be nice for that day, but the next day it doesn’t stick with them, and the usual improper behavior towards one another just continues. Getting children to listen to these things is difficult, with the growth of children on social media, and the mass amount of pessimism towards being positive increasing, being nice seems cringe in their eyes. There seems to be an increase towards being negative on purpose, there seems to be a romanticization of mental illness, violence, and general negativity. I believe that these have an enormous impact on people deciding to just be not a good human being towards one another. There is so much more to be said about social media and influencer’s factors on the general well being of relationships between everyone.

- Relating to the one above, I think that restricting or showing children critical thinking when it comes to online activity and consuming short form content can help with the mass spread of despondency. When I was talking with my Dad about this, a great point that he brought up was rewarded negativity. When you see news about a couple online, it’s almost never about how a couple is doing exceptional things, and they just bought a cute beach house. No! It’s about how a couple had a dramatic breakup after something bad and toxic happened. Children are consuming content about the most recent negative interaction because that is what gets promoted. People love to watch bad things, because it evokes emotion, therefore they will interact, thus the video gets more popular. Our online life is meshing into our real life day by day, and teaching children more than internet safety but social safety with social media is an idea worth looking into. Education on subjects, such as consuming media the smart way, can make sure that they know the importance of not viewing unhealthy things as normal, and adapt our curriculum for that. This is an odd topic to explain, but I hope this did a decent job.

- Also, we should take a look at how children develop social skills. In school we learn our ABCs and 123s, but developing emotional intelligence at a young age is a different experience for everyone. In this day and age, with the access to post anything that comes to your mind at any given Moment, I see people that genuinely do not understand that everyone is different. We need to teach social health between people, to combat the negative normals of online social interaction. Schools also need to understand that everyone is different, and I think that further thought into developing social skills, and appropriate emotions is important. Every child has a different life, and different experiences, and understanding that spreading negativity is more than just an inspirational video about not spreading bad things. It’s more than a concept, violence happens every day, and I was a kid and understanding this is confusing! We need to teach things about violence, children deserve to understand things at their learning level, and learn how to alleviate it and why we solve these things; we should never teach how to say sorry without showing kids the importance of saying sorry. In my situation with Red, if we could achieve learning healthy relationships younger, then we can have and make healthier relationships later. Perhaps Red wouldn’t have done the things they did, and made me feel such strong and such wretched emotions. At school, I felt as if they could do a better job at developing understandings of the world of greatness, and dark times, that they are curious about and actively exploring. Maybe I do or do not make sense but this is just my opinion in this conversation.

- The other reasons here and below are things that we can do, but some things that I can do personally about youth violence are not participating in factors leading to it. I can choose to be kind and respectful in my actions and words to others. Just taking a second to think about if what you're saying could or is harmful, even if that is not your intention.
- Also, you want to be a safe space where people can trust what they say to you. After a week of going through the situation with Red, I told my parents. I knew my self worth, and I knew that it was not being respected by Red so I informed my parents of what was going on and we worked out a plan. If another person going through a similar situation had nobody to talk to or figure out what to do, then you should make yourself a safe person for them and for everyone. Developing a plan, and having kids know that they are safe is a good lesson for everyone in every stage of life. My Mom decided to call the school and tell them about what had happened, but unfortunately the school handled it very irrationally. What my Mom told me, was that the office had said "Oh Red's not an issue, they were probably just trying to show off their partner." Basically saying kids will be kids, luckily after calling them a second time, my Mom disgusted by the first answer, the office informed my Mom that they would make sure that Red wasn't going near me and wouldn't cause problems. Though that worked poorly as I was chased in the halls by Red. Though the moral of that is: you should be a safe person in everyone's life, they should be able to get help and feel comfortable talking to you.
- As well, if you see youth violence issues in any shape or form, you should take your power and your ability to help, and seek aid from a safe person who will know how to handle the situation. In so many cases it's miserable to ask for help, especially if it involves somebody you know and respect, but for the safety of others please report these things.
- I think that everyone should help make their fellow students not feel ostracized, if everyone has a sense of belonging, and can feel comfortable at school then so many issues would never pop up. Though having tight knit students can lead to drama and gossip, if we can all just get along (which is way harder than it sounds) then we can leap forward into a better tomorrow.
- (This advice is something I advise parents to do.) Since the USA lives in a more individualistic based society, rather than a community based one, there is a noticeable difference in how us individual people treat each other on a daily basis. With the rise of claiming yourself as the 'main character', and viewing others as just side characters, we lose respect for our peers and gain a bigger ego. I believe that parents have a duty to raise their children with positive discipline and teach them to stay humble and respectful to everyone around them. In addition with respect, we need to teach empathy and meaningful connections to others. This goes back to emotional intelligence; if we do not understand others then our actions will be rash. That way, we can eliminate the harmful individuality mindset, and allow our children to grow up knowing that they are a unique member of a loving and caring community surrounding them.

**(How has Youth Violence affected my life was answered in the story, I just wanted to explicitly state that so there was no confusion!)**

#### Concluding Thoughts, Because I Sadly Can't Keep You Forever!

None of these are in any way fool proof plans to prevent youth violence as a whole, but as a person with dozens of my opinions on things, and how to fix them, these were just a couple of decent ones that I could vomit out onto my keyboard, and as you can tell I already have a lot to say. If you asked me about this, like my Dad did, I have a billion more issues that I would love to ramble on about, but those are my general points on how us as a community and as an individual can decrease the surplus uprising in violence.

I do want to point out that I did mention getting a group of children, teenagers, and adults together to discuss these issues. There might be something similar to that at this time, but implementing brainstorming from people of different backgrounds and lives could help solve these issues. Youth violence and the ever growing world of social media are increasing, and people like me know a handful about these topics, and experience witnessing youth violence in many different forms at school. Many famous people such as George Washington weren't tremendous because they had a billion IQ, but because they surrounded themselves with people who knew different things and had the ability to help properly. This is why diversity is extremely important in real life conversations.

Youth violence is horrible, and I'm very glad I had this fantastic opportunity to share some of my thoughts! Thank you for reading this, be your best self, and have a great day!

Sources:

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Hannah Qureshi – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Summit Academy - Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen



### Youth Violence

Youth violence has proven to be a very big problem in the United States Of America and many other places. Whether physical violence, emotional violence, Violence to others, or to themselves it is harming and needs to be stopped. Violence is a way to emotionally or physically hurt someone or themselves. In the law the definition of violence is the unlawful exercise of physical force or intimidation by the exhibition of such force. There are many versions of youth violence such as, vaping, suicide, bullying, self harm, assault, threats, gang related violence, fighting, blackmail, sexual assault, child abuse, cyberbullying, other abuse, starving, manipulation, sexual harassment, prejudice, alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, hate groups, racism, discrimination, burglary/theft, media violence, absence of positive parental figures, gossip, jealousy, put down, and many other things.

Youth violence occurs when a child or teen has an unstable home life or a dysfunctional family. Being abused, parents fighting, siblings bullying, poverty, being insecure, starvation, being a sexual assault victim, because of the want to control others and cause fear, they think its fun and entertaining to watch people suffer, to hurt someone, sometimes they cannot control themselves and their emotions so they take it out on others, they can be under pressure, they don't care how others feel, it can be jealousy, fear, or just to be popular.

I have been very lucky to not have had any personal experience with youth violence. But on the other hand i have had many friends who are or were suicidal, depressed, or have anxiety. In my seventh grade year my best friend made an attempt on suicide by overdosing on her pills, I was one of the first people in my school to figure out what had happened to her. Luckily the attempt failed and she returned to school the week later after receiving treatment in a mental facility. Earlier this school year a friend told me multiple times that he wanted to kill himself and that others had told him to kill himself, one day after he had said that i heard about a kid in our school making a suicide threat and police being sent to their house. It just so happened that my friend wasnt at school that day, me and many others were very worried. Luckily – again – he was okay and he had just switched to online school. Violence of any sort but especially youth violence needs to be stopped. It is an awful thing that has ruined many people's lives.

When asked how you can stop or prevent youth violence you can say many things. Here is a list of ways I have put together. You can talk to the person and figure out what's going on. You could report it to a school counselor or something else. You can just be kind to them. You can have and adult help, Take personal responsibility for your actions, make a personal commitment to not participate in violence, be a positive role model for young children, You can set positive goals for yourself, you can not show up to every fight your invited to watch or participate in, If you want to you can promote faith in god and moral values, find your personal happy place, and get involved in community service. These things can calm you down and/or help others in what they're struggling with.

In conclusion, youth violence is a big problem in this world and it needs to be stopped. There is an extensive amount of types of youth violence and it is not a good thing. People who participate in or are victims of youth violence tend to grow up to be more aggressive towards others and sometimes themselves. Youth violence has different effects on everyone and is a huge problem that needs to be solved.

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



When I think of bullying or violence, I feel sad and angry. People in this world should have no reason to bully others for who they are. People should learn how to respect others and deal with the fact that they are not your dream-like-type of people. Ain't nobody going to be the way you want them to be. Everybody is different, so have it that way. It won't be fun and games when everybody is the same. But that leads people to have traumatic experiences and think differently about themselves. People have their own problems and getting bullied or getting bullied about it makes it a lot worse and having to deal with it is just sad and unnecessary. You don't need to make people feel bad for who they are and what they choose to be. Be good to people cause you never know what happens and what goes through people's heads. They can be the happiest person in the world, but really, they might feel scared and lonely. They think they have no one to talk to or even just trust others.

Violence has affected my life and made me change the way of thinking about myself. It hurts and it's not fun. People who bully others just think it's necessary or they are just going through something as well. I've been called a lot of names by people. It really made me insecure and I ended up getting depressed. I ended up also being suicidal and struggled to talk to my own parents. I couldn't really say anything to them about what happened since I was just used to being quiet and dealing with it myself. And there are a lot more people who go through the same or even worse. Some might not last through it because of suicide. Depression has gotten to a really big rate due to violence and bullying. People need to be in a peaceful ecosystem. There's no point in judging when it doesn't do anything for anybody but hurt people. Except, sadly, not everybody knows that and they think it's okay. It's really not. We live in a world that has a lot of struggles and it's sad how we have to live in a bunch of problems.

Youth violence can be caused by a lot of things. For instance, family can even be a dangerous environment because they could've been mistreating you, pushing you a lot in giving you stress, or even domestic violence. Parents can be people who you might not even be able to trust because of violence, and maybe more problems. School can be one thing that can lead to violence or bullying. School can be tough and you might not be able to always finish it. That can even lead to stress. You might have an important essay that's due a week from when you started. You don't know what to do for the essay and then there is the feeling of stress that makes it feel like you are at the point where you think it's the end of the world because you can't figure what to do for your essay. There is also school where there are people judging you in a way that can make you violent. Any bad given situation people can be in, can lead to violence. There are a lot of possibilities that someone can be violent. There are even friends for instance. They could seem like really good friends until they start to pick on you. They could ruin your friendship because they think they have no friends because they knew someone who broke their trust.

I can spread kindness to others by complimenting them. I can talk to them and start a conversation. I can make them feel like they can start to trust others and know that they can and have friends. I can stand up for them when they are getting bullied. I can spread awareness to others that don't notice or realize what they are inflicting onto others. I know ahead of time that there can be a change in the world that can make a happy and safe environment for everyone that people can trust. We will live in peace when kindness is spread all over the world. I hope that people can change, and make an improvement in less violence.

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



### Youth Violence

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

What I have found to have caused most youth violence is stereotypical bullying. I have heard about tons of bullying from my friends, family, and even news articles, but I have not been really affected by bullying nor seen much bullying. My friends, on the other hand, have been greatly affected by it. I have seen some of my friends get into a fight and I would try to break it up. In elementary school, if you bullied some kids in class you would get kicked out of class and put in the hallway. This could be a reward for some bullies because they got to miss out on the lesson and did not have to do the work. I find this system very dumb and it needs to be revised. This could just make the bullies continue bullying others so they could get out of class, kinda like a “reward”. I know some kids do not have good family or home lives. They could be influenced by drugs or alcohol. This is also to blame for youth violence.

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

I asked myself this question and was reminded of my friend. We were talking to each other one day before getting on the bus to go home. This had been a hard day for the both of us. Finals week was around the corner and we were both stressed out. It was a really hard day for him because he was teased about his height and size. We were talking and he said he wanted to “kill himself”. My heart completely burst inside of me. To hear one of my friends tell me he wanted to kill himself was tragic for me. I hid my sadness from him because I was scared to cry in front of him. I went home feeling super sad. My parents asked me what was wrong and I said nothing. My mom took my sister to ballet and I had enough of hiding my sadness and burst into tears. I told my mom about the situation and she felt bad for me. I had a really strong friendship with him, and my mom and his mom were friends. My mom called his mom about the situation and that probably saved him. I still have him as a friend today.

#### **What can I and the rest of the World do to Reduce Youth Violence?**

What I and other kids could do is look for people that seem like they are having a bad day. You could go and talk to them and try to cheer them up or you could talk to them and see what’s going on. Parents could look for signs of suicidal thoughts in kids or teens and try to help them overcome these thoughts. People could encourage good thoughts and actions with kids which could teach them how to live a good life and not become a bully themselves. You don’t know what other people go through. Next time, think before you do. Who knows, that one kid you bully, you could not see him the next day.

Connor Teasdale – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Highland Junior High – Teacher, Kelsie Memmott



## Youth Violence

### Introduction

When I was younger, I'm sure I didn't think much about youth violence and I probably didn't think it was that bad. But now that I'm older I understand what youth violence is and I want to help people who are experiencing youth violence. A lot of the time youth violence can simply be kids bullying you, but it can also be any abuse. No matter what type of youth violence a person is feeling, they should tell a trusted adult, someone who they feel comfortable being with. Because no one should be treated badly. We should all be treated equally and we should all respect each other. No matter where someone came from or what they look like, bullying shouldn't happen. Abuse also shouldn't happen, because it causes harm to people physically, or mentally. We need to remember to always be nice to people. How has youth violence affected my life Growing up I never really have had youth violence in my life. All that has happened to me is teasing. Kids would call me names, or laugh at me, but nothing serious has happened. I have never been bullied so badly and I really didn't get bullied. This doesn't mean I was completely fine at school, because like I said I got called names or laughed at. When these kids would call me names or laugh at me I wouldn't like it. It wouldn't make me cry but it would make me feel a little sad. I would also feel bad though for the kids teasing me. I would feel bad that these kids did this, I wanted them to change. Even though youth violence has never really happened in my life it happens in a lot of other kids' lives. I know that a lot of kids get hit as a punishment from their parents. This is physical abuse which is not right, I myself have never been hit. There is also emotional abuse and that's not good at all and no one deserves to be emotionally abused. There is also sexual abuse and that's also very very bad. All of these are forms of abuse and it can happen to adults and kids. Sadly these forms of abuse are common in children, some people do get help and tell someone but others don't report abuse happening to them. Hopefully more and more kids report any of these forms of abuse and less parents or adults abuse children. What are the causes of youth violence There are a lot of causes of youth violence, kids who bully other kids might bully because they want attention from other kids. Some kids don't get much attention from their parents so they want attention from other kids. They want to be noticed and they try doing that by bullying other kids. Another reason is bullies get bullied themselves. When kids bully other kids it may be because they get bullied by other people, that can be their parents, their step siblings. Maybe even a bully has experienced abuse themselves and that angers them so they take their anger out on other kids. Most of the time bullying happens because the bully has problems in their life. The bully can feel unhappy with something that is going on in their life. There are also multiple causes of child abuse. One cause is when an adult abuses a child, it may be because they have a disorder. Another reason is when the adult was a kid they got abused themselves and so they think that's what they should do to their child or to a child. Also the adult could have anger issues and so when a child does something they don't like, they abuse the child. Or the adult could have grown up with an addict who barely gave the attention that a parent or guardian should give to their kid. This can also cause exploitation of children or absence of positive parental role models. These are both bad, and an absence of positive parental role models has a big impact on the kid. Without a present, positive fatherly role a kid is way more likely to be violent and bully other kids. The causes of bullying, abuse, and violence can be different for people, but despite what's happening in your life, bullying is not the answer.

There are ways to solve problems in your life, talking to someone is a really good way because you can really open up on what's happening in your life. More people need to understand you can always help yourself. What can i do about youth violence Because youth violence is something that happens to a lot of kids or teens, I want to do what I can about it. Obviously I can't stop every parent from being abusive or every bully from bullying, but I could stop people from being abusive in the future or I can help bullies understand what they are doing is not right. How exactly, you might ask. Well I can use this essay to show people that it is not right to be abusive to the youth. Also I can use this essay to show bullies it's not right to bully people. I feel like sometimes when a person is abusing someone or bullying someone they don't understand that what they are doing is wrong. So when people understand that, they might not do these wrong things and those people can also tell people being abusive and being a bully is wrong. Which would hopefully stop a good number of people. It can be hard for that to work though, because a lot of people could read this or hear about it and not care at all. People might read this though and still continue their abusive behaviors because they're too used to being abusive. Or someone who is a bully might read this and not care because they might think bullying is the only way to get attention. So it really depends on the person and if they want to change or not. All I can do to stop youth violence is spread the word on how bad it is and tell people what the effects of youth violence are. Some future effects are smoking, substance use, obesity, depression, school dropout, and even suicide. These effects can really impact a person's life, and that is why it's important to help people understand not to be violent to the youth. I not only want to stop people from being violent, but I also want others to try and stop youth violence. Because the more people that try and stop people from being violent to the youth, then there is a bigger chance people will actually stop from their abusive or bully habits. There are a lot of people that probably need some understanding on why being violent to the youth is wrong. When they understand they can stop, then kids who are getting abused or bullied can be happier. Making changes in your behavior can be hard and people might think they can't change into a better person. But with help from friends and family members, it can be easier. Conclusion Youth violence may be common but it's not too late to make a change. The people that are violent to the youth can make changes and be better people, show love to family members. Show respect and kindness to people who don't deserve to be disrespected because the more people that are kind will make us happy in life. The causes for youth violence can vary between people and even if you had a bad childhood, you don't have to be violent and you can get help. Even if you get drunk a lot and are violent only while you're drunk, help is still available. No one deserves to be abused, bullied, exploited, or subjected to any forms of violence. No matter what race, religion, or background a person comes from, bullying shouldn't happen. Overall we should all be kind, respectful and just be a good person. Because life is short and you should make the absolute best of it.

Miles Thayer – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Lehi Junior High – Teacher, Chancellor Carter



Everything is perfect. Everything is great.  
A roof's over my head  
and food's on my plate  
I should be happy,  
joyful, and carefree.  
I am grateful.  
But I am not happy.  
I create a facade  
and pretend to be fine.  
But I am not.  
And I cannot cry.  
For if I sob,  
then I will be seen.  
So I remain unnoticed  
to avoid what is mean.  
I blend into the crowd  
and slip between the cracks. But all is so loud  
and pressure cracks.  
I am alone,  
yet surrounded by people. Each one of them,  
I know may be evil.  
So I keep my head down  
to avoid an encounter.  
I quickly run home.  
My steps never falter.

I run upstairs and to my room  
to hide inside a dream.  
My bed is a soft, sweet tomb,  
but my eyes are wide and gleaming. For if I sleep, I'll soon wake up  
and the cycle will continue.  
So I lie awake in dread,  
my mind tearing at its sinews.  
"I don't want to go back,"  
I whisper to myself.  
But it's futile, it's pointless.

I wish I were an elf  
in a fantasy world,  
walking through the forest.  
But I am human, a useless creature, breaking down this planet.

I wake to a horrid tune,  
its familiarity is striking.  
It fills me with dread  
and my pulse starts spiking.  
I must go back to that wretched place, that hopeless cage of torture;  
they say it's beneficial  
but I say it's torture.  
I wish I had a weapon  
so I could end it now  
or destroy what hurts me  
and brings my spirits down.  
I want to grab my soul  
and toss it in the Styx.  
Hell is better than this routine  
that turns my mind to bricks.

This is too much  
for any kid to handle  
so we take a harmful object  
and leave our bodies in shambles. Or hurt those who hurt us  
and we shoot up our schools. But they don't care  
if blood around us pools. They'll blame it on us  
and say we're evil,  
then continue the torture.  
They are evil.

I keep to myself  
and write the pain away.  
Maybe I'll break my fingers  
so I have to come out and say that I am not fine.  
in fact, I want to die.  
Existence is overrated  
because we live to hurt.  
They say that everyone matters, but I say they're wrong. Nothing is important  
so why should you stress?  
Live your best life,  
you only get one chance.  
But these people aren't letting me, they say that I'm naive.  
That I'm young and need to learn.  
But behind their masks, they scheme.  
They want to program me  
like a bot or machine.  
But I am human and have emotions  
just like everyone else.

But my peers around me  
are all put under spells.  
They're told the stress is worth  
the education they get.  
But is an outdated education  
more important than life?  
We work so hard  
and in our minds, stress bites.

We're not bad kids,  
just troubled and hurt.  
We call out for help  
and they kick us in the dirt.  
But still, there are some  
who care about us.  
They give me hope  
even while my mind rusts.  
They listen to me  
and keep the pain at bay.  
They encourage me to speak.  
So here's what I have to say:

Violence is a massive problem in our society and it surprises many people that it is also common among youth. If you think about it, though, you will realize how much sense it makes. Most people do not learn how to deal with stress until they are adults, and even then it's often too much for them to handle.

I spent my first six years in school oblivious to the problems in America's education system, and once I was in the fifth grade, I thought the stress I was experiencing was my fault and that I was too stupid to handle it. Then, in sixth grade, I figured out things that changed my life for the better and worse. I figured out how messed up our school system was—if you don't know what I'm talking about, don't worry, it will come up later in the essay. At this point in my life, I was quite pessimistic so I went down a path of anger and resentment. I fell into a deep depression and heavily considered ending my life. Every day, I got angrier and more hopeless and eventually thought about hurting people around me. I knew I couldn't do it, but I still thought about it. I realized that I did not want to hurt anybody, I just wanted to send a message. A message that is constantly sent by others and never received. I quickly dismissed the thought of violence and remembered where it got people in the past: imprisoned, dead, and detested.

When I started having these thoughts of suicide and violence, I did not want to tell my parents. It was probably because I didn't think they would understand. I don't remember how, but they eventually found out that I had depression. Maybe it was because my dad is a therapist or maybe it was because I am basically a clone of him (except not bald with a beard, six feet tall, and incredibly muscular in my forties). I started going to therapy, which helped a bit, but not for long. I felt fine while in the therapist's office or at home but when I was in school I wanted, more than anything, to die.

Even now, I am not happy and will probably always be a bit suicidal, but not for the same reasons as before. Now I am irritated and depressed because I am spending so much time in school that I could be spending helping people or learning the things I want to learn.

There are many causes of youth violence in America but one of the biggest, I think, is school. School in America is certainly not the worst, it teaches us many important things and most schools do their best to keep kids safe, but it is not the best either. Of course, everything has its flaws, but those of the American education system are fatal. Literally. From my experience and what my alarmingly small amount of friends have told me, the stress students collect from school is more than enough to drive them to hurt themselves and/or others. A very common manifestation of this is bullying, and escalated, are school shootings.

Many people believe that school shootings happen because the shooters are bad people, which is not true. School shooters (the ones who are students) are troubled kids who don't know how to deal with stress, so they take that stress out on others in an extreme way, i.e. they engage in a school shooting. There can be many reasons for school shootings, other than stress, like kids being bullied, ignored, neglected, underestimated, etc. A reason why not all kids with those issues are violent is that they are good at making reasonable choices. Like me.

In the past, I have thought about committing acts of violence similar to a school shooting, but as I said before, I have never had the desire to harm anyone. I am also growing up in a safe and kind home environment with very intelligent parents and a therapist for a father.

I have never experienced neglect and only fall victim to slight teasing; never bullying. However, people constantly ignore me (not my parents, mainly my peers). This is mostly my fault. I've never been a very outgoing or extroverted person and I tend to slip through the cracks. But it seems like every time I try to be outgoing, people either ignore me as if I'm not saying anything, or they stare at me like I just started speaking some ancient language only uttered in the ninth circle of Hell, and then they keep talking to each other like I never said anything. I used to be okay with this because I rarely had anything to say, but now I have things to say that I need people to hear.

Unlike my peers, teachers and most other adults rarely act like I don't exist, but they seldom take anything I say into account. I think this is because I am a kid and many adults think that kids are always wrong when opposing adults. This principle is one of the main causes of youth violence because it makes children feel powerless and trapped in messed-up situations. This principle is also where the idea of "back-talking" stems from. You've probably heard of back-talking because it is an unfortunately common phrase among parents and teachers and is a major part of the school problem. The people who use this phrase are usually close-minded and haven't thought about the impact it has on their children/students. I believe that this problem can be easily fixed if we let people know that it is a problem.

Another reason for violence that comes from school is children lacking a sense of purpose. Many (possibly most) kids have passions that are not taught in school and school takes up so much of their time that they can't do what they are passionate about. This makes these kids extremely depressed because they start to think that nothing suits them and, therefore, they have no purpose. Humans long for purpose and when they think that there is none, they fall apart.

Bullying is itself violence and a cause of it. Bullies are usually what they are because they were/are mistreated by schoolmates, siblings, parents, teachers, etc. They may also bully because of prejudice, e.g. racism, homophobia, sexism, extreme anti-theism, etc. I think that one of the reasons bullying still exists is because people are not kind to bullies. The more bullies are hated, the more they hate. Bullying is usually punished which I am not entirely against, but bullies are rarely helped which makes them feel like the world is against them. I have met some very unkind people who, when somebody was friendly to them, became much kinder.

Another thing that causes violence and makes people feel trapped is dishonesty. Dishonesty is generally looked down upon but society doesn't fully accept honesty either. Many people value kindness over honesty but when people aren't allowed to voice their real feelings no matter their kindness, it makes them feel censored and like nobody understands them. This is something that I have experienced a lot in my life.

An instance of the "honesty problem" that I experienced was when I was in the car with my mother, arguing about some art project that I needed to turn in. I had so many things that I wanted to say that would have answered all of her questions but they would have been "too honest" and impolite. This kept me in that argument which quickly became heated all because honesty isn't accepted.

Another instance of the honesty problem that I experienced was in P.E. class. I was annoyed that my parents had to purchase a gym uniform from the school because I already owned clothes that I exercised in all the time, and the uniform was a tad too revealing for my taste. I also wasn't comfortable with undressing in a room with a bunch of immature teenage boys, as I'm not exactly heterosexual or comfortable with the appearance of my body. I wanted to ask the P.E. teacher why we had to wear the uniform, but I couldn't bring myself to be honest. I thought the things I wanted to say would come off as rude, so I stayed silent for fear of annoying the big and scary (but respectable) man my P.E. teacher was. That made me feel a lot worse because I knew that there was something I could do about it, but didn't. Because of my extreme insecurities, this discomfort was pretty close to that which nearly drove me to violence, years prior.

Remember how I said earlier that school is one of the biggest causes of youth violence? Well, parts of the school problem are subsets of what I am about to talk about.

The main cause of youth violence, and most other areas of violence, is people living their lives as if it is a chore. Think about it, the basic day in a person's life is: Wake up, eat, work, eat, sleep. That is sad. Sure, kids have a lot more leisure time than adults and usually get to play after they work, but (especially with homework) their playtime does not last very long especially if they have to do chores at home, which most kids do. People waste their lives working. That doesn't mean people shouldn't have to work, it means that work should not be the main focus of life. Humans are so focused on surviving, that we forget to live. One of the main ideas that I live by is that we are just a bunch of slightly intelligent monkeys, living on a big rock, floating through the endless cosmos, and if we were to disappear, it would not matter. Some people may find this scary or depressing, but I find it comforting. There is no point in life, so do what makes you happy. Existentialism, baby!

Now, what can I do to help fix these problems?

Well, first off, I can encourage therapy which helped me quite a bit with certain issues.

Next, there is this book that changed my life. Now, prepare yourself because the title is a bit much: It is *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*\*k* by Mark Manson. Every chance I have gotten, I have recommended this book because it changed my worldview and made me a much better and more honest person.

Speaking of honesty, that is another way I can help. People need to hear the truth because, without it, you can't solve many problems. For instance, if I meet somebody who is annoyingly judgemental, I'll just say "Hey, you're pretty judgemental," not as an insult, not as a compliment, just an honest observation. Many people don't realize their serious flaws until they're told the truth.

Something that I enjoy and think can help is making video essays and posting them on the internet. The topics that I've covered there are very similar to what I have written in this essay: School shootings and how to stop them, the "back-talking" problem, close-mindedness, etc. If I keep making those videos I might be able to make a big impact.

Another way I can help is by writing. I know that writing and solving problems are two things I am

pretty good at, and if I combine those two things, maybe I can write a book about youth violence. But for now, this essay is the best I've got. I also don't completely understand how to communicate with the government, but maybe I can write a letter to them.

I could also start a blog. I have noticed that blogs become very popular if they have a lot of work put into them. I have trouble committing to things that involve speaking, and blogs only require writing which is something I can easily commit to. Blogs about world problems/sociology are quite popular, so I think that I could make a big impact if I started one.

Possibly the biggest way I can help is teaching people about existentialism. I find existentialism to be an incredibly beneficial philosophy, even though it scares many people. Often when people find out about the concept, they have an existential crisis—something that I never experienced—and sometimes reject the idea. When I first found out about existentialism, I accepted it without concern and I think it would be beneficial for the remediation of the existential crisis problem if I helped others accept it as well.

Whew, that was long. Sorry if your brain melted halfway through. I hope this essay can help at least a few people—whether they're kids or adults—to understand themselves and others and seek help if they are considering committing acts of violence. I have been dreaming of writing down all of my ideas into a well-constructed essay for a while, and I finally did it. I'm sure that I will get many more ideas in the future; maybe I'll post them to a blog. Anyway, I hope you learned something, and thank you so much for taking the time to read this essay.

Taylor Wastlund – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Desert Hills Middle School – Teacher, Hayley Pendleton



### Don't Judge Yourself By What Others Did To You

No one has a perfect life. You never know what could be going on behind a closed door. Violence can be experienced in many different ways. I have seen firsthand different physical and verbal abuse throughout my short lifetime, and have family members who have suffered from verbal, physical and sexual abuse themselves. Violence, particularly violence that began early in life can ruin lives. Keep in mind that many abusers were once the abused. In many instances Youth Violence stems from hopelessness and stress. There is help though through different kinds of therapy, becoming involved, understanding and listening. There are so many ways you can get help and people to help you. I believe that the youth of today deserve happiness, empathy, and opportunities.

Youth violence can be defined in so many ways. In "The Issue of bullying" by Stomp Out Bullying, the writers say, "5.4 million students stay home on any given day because they're afraid of being bullied" (1). Ninety percent of youth violence starts with either loneliness, lack of love or abuse. No one should have to deal with any of these things. I can't change what other people do but in my opinion we should all try to be kind and think of others. I know that sounds "cheesy" but the world would be a better place. If we all just tried, the results would be extraordinary.

Youth Violence is intentional either Physical, Mental, or Emotional abuse that someone inflicts upon someone else. Many times the offender is suffering through their own trials or their own abuses, which in turn they inflict on other people. I am one of the lucky ones, and have not been a victim of Youth Violence other than some people pushing or bumping into me in the halls, but I have some close and loved relatives who have been. One of my grandparents, my Grandpa was affected by this from his father, my Great Grandpa, who physically and verbally abused him when he was a child. The youth violence he endured left some lasting effects. He was so afraid he would hide underneath cars to get away, and developed a stutter that he hasn't completely gotten over yet. When he got a little older he found very kind people that helped him, and he saw that life could be different. He decided then to avoid all forms of violence and start his own life. He was able to rise above his challenges and become an amazing father and grandfather who stayed away from violence and its harmful effects.

Another example of youth violence that I would like to share is a story of my grandmother. She also was physically abused and sexually as well by her brother. He would do horrible things to her and she didn't tell anyone for the longest time because her brother told her if she told anyone she would be punished. If you are like my grandma and have been abused DO NOT listen to the abuser, tell someone and get help! There are so many wonderful people in this world. Tell a friend, a teacher, a church leader or relative, they can and will help you. My grandmother never found the help she needed at home, but had wonderful friends, and church leaders who helped her through it. When she was old enough to leave the situation she was able to find safety and healing by looking to those that cared for her and had her best interests at heart. There is always someone to turn to don't suffer alone.

I have witnessed first hand Youth Violence at my school and have experienced some in the hallways between classes.

In my school there was a big fight between 5 different girls and they were swearing, pulling hair, and even biting. I do not know what it was about but I know that these kind of things need to stop. We need to be considerate of other people no matter what they look like, talk like or anything else. As George Elliot said, "Dont Judge a book by its cover." I have experienced Youth Violence even in my school in the hallways. One day when I was walking down the hall a boy accidentally bumped into me and I said sorry and started walking away when he pushed on my backpack and I turned around and he started yelling at me and said "Hey watch where your going!." I didn't say anything and just walked away. I didnt have time to waste on someone who was being a bully. I knew it would lead knowwhere. If you are being bullied in school just remember that the abuser, the person thats bullying you, might have something going on in their personal life, so be considerate and don't add to the problem. Tell a counselour or trusted adult about your experiences and they will help you help the abuser if they are struggling and they will take care of it.

One final example. I didn't go into much detail about some of the things my grandparents had to endure before finding help, but my mom had to witness a very gruesome incident of youth violence during her school years, so fare warning if you do not do well with gruesome things then stop here. When my mom was in high school and lived in Colorado she had a very pretty friend that was well liked and honestly a really nice person. Another girl in the school that my mom's friend didnt even know saw her boyfriend looking at her because she was very pretty and got very jealous. This girl and some of her friends and my mom quotes "Surrounded and ganged up on her." Right in the hallway between classes they started stabbing her in the head and face with prencils so that she wouldnt be pretty anymore. A teacher stopped it, but they had already done a lot of damage. Now luckily she survived, but they succeeded and had caused lifelong scars on her face. No one should have to feel afraid because of how they look.

In "Youth Violence" by World Health Organization, the organization says, "Worldwide, over 176,000 homicides occur among youth 15-29 years of age each year, which is 37% of the total number of homicides globally each year" (1). Whether it be Physical, Mental, Verbal, Emotional, Sexual or anything, you can find help and get better and start a new life away from the horrible things that have happened to you. Whether it be depression, loneliness, addiction, lack of empathy, racism, verbal abuse or even a loss of a loved one. You CAN get help! You can first start by finding someone you trust, talking about your feelings, understanding, talking to couseLOURS and therapists, and even REPORTING IT. If you see something DO NOT just sit there and do nothing, be an upstander and help people. If it is you who is being abused, get help, there are so many people out there that can help you and want to help you. Don't judge yourself by what others did to you.

# *Honorable Mentions*

*Kailee Mitchell*

**7th Grade, Diamond Fork Middle  
School Teacher, Reilly Ryan**

*Halle Nate*

**7th Grade, Diamond Fork Middle School  
Teacher, Lauren Engle**

*Kelsee Sagers*

**8th Grade, Roy Junior High  
Teacher, Eugene Endicott**

*Charlotte Smith*

**7th Grade, Diamond Fork  
Middle School  
Teacher, Amanda Burrows**



*Noah Thomas*

**7th Grade, Diamond Fork  
Middle School  
Teacher, Autumn Walton**

Kailee Mitchell – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Reilly Ryan



### What's The Point?

Violence is a big problem in everyday life, and has been for a long time. It is important to take action when you witness violence. Some causes of youth violence can be having a hard home life, feeling insecure, or even bullying people because you get bullied or have gotten bullied. The main types of violence are mentally and physically hurting someone. This is also known as bullying. Bullying is a big problem, especially in schools. Bullying can lead to low self esteem and empathy, high levels of anxiety, anger, and/or depression. Bullying can lead to worse events, such as breaking the law, or even ending your own life, or ending another's life. It can also cause health problems, mental AND physical. You see, youth violence can be very dangerous, so if you or someone you know is having youth violence problems, don't hesitate to get help. The faster you get help, the faster the problems can be fixed. There are just some problems, like this, that you may need some help to fix.

If you witness someone getting bullied, don't just sit there and watch your peers, or even strangers, get hurt. Help them, don't be afraid to stand up and do the right thing. When people get bullied, sometimes they feel like they are breaking. So, be their glue and stand up for them. Even if you think they can handle it, they might not show how much it hurts. They may feel like they are alone, so be there for them. To help people with youth violence, you can also ask them about what they are going through. It can help to be a person that just listens, sometimes they just need someone to talk to. If it gets worse, talk to someone that will be able to help them, unless you are able to help them with their problems. Make sure that they have a safe space in case they need it. Before you go talk to someone, let the person with the problem know before so that they have a chance to tell someone themselves.

Violence has affected my life in a couple of ways. I always get bullied about my 'big forehead' (Haha, so funny... right?) And I can tell you for sure, it hurts that people are constantly bullying me about something that I cannot even control. Most of the time, I have no clue what to say back. Sometimes, even my friends laugh. And when that happens, I feel crushed. I try to play it off, pretending like those simple, yet hurtful, comments don't bother me. Pretending so I can make them think that I am worthy enough to be their friend. Even some of my closest friends laugh, and I feel betrayed. Why would they, of all people, laugh with everyone else? I also notice that if you don't have the 'right' clothes, friends, hair, etc... you get bullied. Which, honestly, makes no sense. Why do I have to get punished for being myself and expressing my personality and feelings? Oh, right... It's because if I am not like everyone else, that means I am weird. So, when you see something, then say something. It could even save someone's life.

Halle Nate– 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Lauren Engle



### Youth Violence

Youth violence needs to come to an end. It happens everywhere throughout this world. Some people don't understand the causes of youth violence. For example, kids that are going through this may take it out on others, or themselves. Even when they grow up, they might be violent to their own kids. After all, it's all they know. Violence has probably been in everyone's lives. Some people think that violence is only physical, but it can be mental as well. Many of us have gotten yelled at, or have gotten in a verbal fight with somebody.

Many people don't realize that even just yelling at somebody can affect your relationship with them. Violence has affected my life a lot. When someone yells at me, I'm usually in a bad mood afterwards, and then I take it out on someone else. I know a lot of other people that have had this feeling before. I never enjoy getting mad, and then getting mad at somebody else that didn't do anything wrong. It happens to me a lot, and I hate it because it makes me feel sad after I had just yelled at someone else. That's why I hope youth violence can stop. Usually, if there is a bully in your school, or someone that is mean to others, they have something going on in their life that no one else knows about. Anyone in your school can be experiencing violence, whether they are mean to others, nice to others, or shy and quiet around others. Once again, these kids experience violence at home, and that is why they tease or bully other kids.

Sometimes people ask what the difference between youth violence, and violence is. The difference is that when kids are younger, they learn from the person who is violent to them. Then they might do it as well. When they grow up, and have more friends, they might get into many fights and have bad relationships. They might also be violent to their own kids when they get older. Then they pass it on to their own kids. It only creates bad relationships and more violent people. Another thing that can happen with youth violence is hard times in school. When kids have a lot going on at home, it's hard for them to focus, and then they aren't educated properly. When kids don't learn anything, or get bad grades, it can only lead to their parents yelling at them even more, or worse.

The only way we can help solve this problem is telling people what the causes of youth violence are. It can really affect a kid's life! I haven't been through physical violence before, but after reading multiple stories of other kids' lives, I understand what it's like for them. It can be really hard, especially when no one knows that it's happening. It is also very hard for a kid to talk to someone about this, because they don't want their parents to get in trouble.

In conclusion, youth violence should not be happening anymore. It's very unhealthy for children to be going through any of that. Especially when they are in school, and trying to learn. It's very hard to focus when you have things going on at home, and it can be very stressful at times. It's sad to think that some kids don't have a very good relationship with their parents! Violence is not a good punishment to use on a kid either. Even just yelling at someone is not a very good punishment, and it can affect their life forever. In the end, violence is not the only key to solving problems.

Kelsee Sagers – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Eugene Endicott



*15 tulips, 7 lies*

A loving message

An apology

A favor

A surprise

*11 tulips, 7 lies*

A loving text

An affirmation

A tolerance,

Being forgiven

*11 tulips, 3 lies*

A poem

A praise

A posy on the prairie

*8 tulips, 3 lies*

Smell the sweet alyssum

"Darling,"

"Are you listening?"

"What's the issue?"

"Tell me I drive you crazy, and you'll be fine."

*8 tulips, 3 lies*

A loving text

An affirmation

A tolerance,

Being forgiven

"Hm?"

"Why would you mention it?"

*8 Tulips, all lies*

Why was I here again?

Was it for a

A poem

A praise,

Perhaps a posy on the prairie?

You're the one who should smell the Alyssum.

No, darling, it's okay.

Maybe,

Perhaps you could give me a compliment.

*Some sort of flower, just lies.*

*Lies, lies, lies.*

Why

Must

You  
Keep  
Me  
In  
The  
Dark?

"You're still my favorite!"

"You're still the person I always turn to!"

"You're the only person I can really say things to!"

"I hate my brother, he manipulates people really badly."

"I never want to be like him. Don't compare me to him."

"You're the best friend I ever could've asked for!"

"It's fine.. You didn't know."

Don't talk to me again.

Agh.. I hate it.

I didn't know,

I didn't know,

Agh, I didn't know,

I didn't know.

This poem is about being manipulated. It represents how it feels. In my opinion, this is a form of youth violence. I want to make people aware of how dangerous people can be when they can manipulate you. First they start out nice, and then they grab onto your heart.

Each paragraph of this poem, the number of tulips or lies changes. The tulips represent something nice the manipulator does. Once too many get used up, they start using up the lies. Eventually, they run out of both.

The flowers represent things, too. Posies represent a not-so-secret secret. The manipulator would make it obvious that they like you. Sweet Alyssum represents madness, or insanity. This is because of the element of gaslighting that often comes up in these situations.

You might have noticed that the text slowly gets bigger throughout the poem. This is because things are slowly getting worse.

Knowing that someone is lying to you is destroying. Especially if you can sense their gaslighting.

The repetition of "I didn't know" is how I didn't understand how devastating this can be to people's mental health. It shows how they use you. They use you for their emotional support, and you don't even get paid. But you just have too strong of a connection with them, (or their past self,) and so you stay.

I wrote this poem to raise awareness of how emotionally cruel people can be. We can't do much, but at the very least we should raise awareness. We also shouldn't be afraid to cut people off that are only hurting us.

Charlotte Smith – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Amanda Burrows



**Do The Write Thing**

How Has Violence Affected My Life?

It is not easy to forgive and forget when you are bullied. I tried to do that and it was very hard. I am going to start by talking about my experience being bullied. It started when I moved to Provo, it was the first day of 1st grade. I was happy the first week of school, and I made two new friends. But then within a month things started to change, it was the beginning of the school day and I was happy. But as I was going to class people started to body shame me in the halls and call me fat. When that happened it started to get to me and I started to think it was true. Until I turned nine, that's the year I told my mom what happened. It might have been three years since it happened but it still hurts. But when my mom said that she was bullied, she told me that she got over it by saying the opposite of what the bully said. So I tried and it helped a lot. That year I learned that it doesn't matter what other people think, it's what you think.

What Are The Causes Of Youth violence?

There are many causes of why youth violence even happens, but the main reason why it happens is because the person that is bullying you could be going through some challenges. That person may be being bullied themselves, or maybe their parents are abusing them, and they could also be depressed. Almost never would a person bully you just because they think it is funny. A person could also be bullying you because they want you to feel the way they are feeling. Bullies just want to let it out on someone because they think that that will make them feel better, but here is some advice, It won't help you at all, it will just make the other person feel very sad. It would make the other person feel scared like a turtle hiding in his shell because a bird is trying to attack it. Once you bully someone you will never be able to take it back. You will always be haunting the person you have bullied constantly. Many people would be too afraid to be your friend or even talk to you.

What Can I Do About Youth Violence?

I think you should think about what you are going to say before you say it. Also when someone is talking behind a person's back to you, change the subject. When someone else is being bullied don't take out your phone, don't just stand there, fight for them, stand by their side until the bully leaves. When you're being bullied you should not react then usually the bully will get bored and do it to another person. In general, just don't be a bully, don't be those people who want to hurt others, and most of all you should be happy. If you're happy, people will like you more and you will most likely find the good things in life. Then you most likely will not be a bully.

I heard a story that my teacher said was about a girl being bullied by a bunch of mean other girls who surrounded her in the hallways of our school and called her names and yelled at her. There weren't many teachers around and many people didn't stand up for her, they just walked right past. Finally, when a teacher was about to come and stop the fight the teacher stopped because a

a girl walked up to the group of girls and stood next to the girl being bullied. After a while the group of girls left. Because of that girl she was never bullied by that group of girls again and because that girl stood up for her, she was able to be happy and free because nobody was bullying her.

So in conclusion if you see someone being bullied, help them. If you are a bully, then think about this, do you really want to be the bully and hurt someone or do you want to be the hero, the one who saves someone from a bully. I hope everyone chooses the hero because everyone is a person and everyone deserves to be treated equally. Don't forget the golden rule, treat others the way you want to be treated.

Noah Thomas – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Autumn Walton



I wake up in the morning and get ready for school. I hate it, but I know I have to because my parents require me to. I get up all gloomy and sad because I know that I have to go through another day of another week of another year. But I don't hate it for the reason that most people would think. I arrive in school and someone is fake tripping and crushing my papers and crushing pencils on my desk. Everyone is telling him to stop because it's just getting annoying. He says at one point, "This is a safety hazard, someone could die." Someone behind me says, "I hope you do", and he thought it was me. So he came up to me and snagged my pencil forcefully out of my hand, me not knowing what was going on told him to give it back. If you are thinking where the teacher is in this, the substitute is in the back corner taking a nap. I try to get it back and my friends eventually start trying to get my pencil back also. Now everyone is telling and trying to get him to give it back, he starts getting mad. He punches my friend and throws him to the ground. I try to get it but then he throws me to the ground, I pop back up and he throws it at my head. Luckily no one seriously got hurt, but it was still bad.

This was my average middle school experience, each time someone did something like that to me, it began to hurt more and more. One day on the bus there was a new rule, girls sit on one side of the bus, the boys sit on the other side. I wasn't there the other day when they made that rule, so I sat on the girls side. And then everyone started telling me about it, so I got up but then came someone who picked on me a lot. He yelled for all to hear, he is a girl! And I burst, all that pain, all that containing my emotions, all that bullying burst. I shot up to him and told him to leave me alone, and he replied with, "What are you going to do about it?" I tapped his hat off, at the time I thought that he totally deserved it and that what he did next was absolutely stupid. But looking back at it I realized that I should have just left it. His hat hit the ground and he slapped me in the face. I didn't want to continue the physical battle so I just sat down. He sat right behind me and bugged me the whole time, every second of that drive I wanted to punch him in the face. I regret tapping his hat off, even though the slap didn't really hurt. I knew that I had to be mature enough to ignore them. I am very glad I didn't hit him back, but every second I also thought why. Why me, why would you come over just to bring me down.

Well there are a lot of ways and reasons why people will bully others. Maybe it's past trauma, or neglect, or peer pressure. But what starts bullying, usually it's from being bullied in the past, so they think that they have to bully others not to be bullied. One way of bullying is that they do it for fun. Yes, some people think that bullying people is fun. There are a lot of reasons why people bully others, really there are a lot of excuses for people to bully others. I think of them as excuses because we are just blaming other things on why bullying is going on. That is not the way to stop bullying, the way to stop youth violence is to do something. Whatever we can do to stop and help youth violence, is what we need to do. Be kind to others, be kind to our kids, and stand up to people when they are being bullied. There are many ways to stop youth violence, but will we do it? We can talk about it, we can learn about it, we can watch it as much as we want, but will we actually do something about it? I try my best to stand up to others when they are being bullied. Mainly because I know what they feel like and know that no one deserves it no matter how bad they are. I also try to be friends with anyone who will be friends with me.

There are some people that I'm friends with now that used to pick on me. I try to be kind no matter who they are or what they may have done, because I know that some people just need someone who is kind to them. I do as much as I can to be kind, stand up to bullies, and be friends with everyone. I hope that eventually we can all come together to stop youth violence, so that we can make a better world where everyone is safe and has someone to look out for them. But it starts with us, choosing to do our part.

## *Utah's Do the Write Thing*

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