



**DO  
THE  
WRITE  
THING**



**HELP STOP THE VIOLENCE**

# Utah's Challenge: Do the Write Thing Student Writings 2025



**Utah State Board of Education**



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## 2025 Do the Write Thing VIP Judges

**Jill Bowers**, *Author*

**Gina Butters**, *Superintendent*  
Weber School District

**Aspen Florence**, *Educational Consultant*  
Solutions Within Consulting

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

**Chair Matt Hymas**, *District 2 Board Member*  
Utah State Board of Education

**Kimberlee Irvine**, *Director*  
*Secondary English Language Art Curriculum*  
Weber School District

**Matt Pennington**, *State Security Chief*  
Utah Department of Public Safety

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

**Adeline White**, *2024 Utah's Do the Write*  
*Thing National Finalists*  
South Ogden Junior High

UTAH'S TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CHALLENGE TO

# Do the Write Thing

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## The Importance of the Do the Write Thing Challenge

The Do the Write Thing (DtWT) 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 *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 *DtWT 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 *DtWT Challenge* is sponsored locally by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and managed by the DtWT Committee and USBE's Prevention Team, School Safety and Student Services Section. In collaboration with families, educators, and communities, the USBE Prevention Team works to identify and decrease risk factors, increase protective factors, and provide students with equitable access to resources in a safe environment that will help them thrive. This collective effort aims to foster student well-being and success across all stages of life.

Prevention staff support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in implementing a student-focused, evidence-informed, data-driven approach for all prevention work, to promote the knowledge and skills necessary for success in life and meaningful engagement with their community.

Through a protective factors approach, Prevention Programs provide resources and supports to reduce the risks of absenteeism, bullying, child abuse, gangs, human trafficking, school dropout, substance use, and suicide. In collaboration with community partners and other stakeholders, these supports are built on a foundation of family engagement, trauma informed care, and restorative practices.

## 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 7th and 8th grade students in the DtWT Challenge. Teachers can find suggestions on how to tie the DtWT Challenge into course work on the [USB E DtWT webpage](#). 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:

1. How has youth violence affected my life?
2. What are the causes of youth violence?
3. What can my community and I do to reduce youth violence?

School districts reported that over 1,300 students participated in classroom discussions, over 930 students prepared writings, and 338 students wrote and submitted writings about youth violence for review. College students from the University of Utah and USB E's Student Support Department staff participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top two writings per school. The VIP Judges had the difficult task of selecting a national finalist, an "Ambassador for Peace," along with three runners up.

Utah's National Finalist, or "Ambassador for Peace," will participate with other Ambassadors at the *DtWT* National Recognition Ceremony in Washington D.C. this July. The Ambassador will meet with members of Utah's Congressional delegation to discuss the problem of youth violence and will 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 DtWT Challenge to do something about youth violence!

The USBE's Prevention Team and the DtWT Organizing Committee thank the following for their generous support:

Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley Foundation, Wheeler Foundation, Kuwait-America Foundation, Marriott International, National Campaign to Stop Violence, Southwest Airlines, Utah State Board of Education, and University of Utah

\*\*\*Format for the following writings may have been altered slightly when inserted for this booklet. The DtWT Committee did their best to keep the original format whenever possible.

# *National Finalist*

**Abigail Owens**

*8th Grade – Fort Harriman Middle School*

Teacher: Ryleigh Osterloh



## Humanity is a rose bush.

Where do I start?

I'm writing this at precisely 11:26 PM, laying in the comfort of my own home, safe from the dangers of the outside world.

I had been wanting to write this lovely essay since my Language Arts teacher allowed the words "essay about youth violence" to slip from her lips. I got the sudden motivation to finally write it up because, well, my best friend told me I was a very poetic person when I'm sick, and I thought, "*What better time than now?*"

Hence, bear with me as we experience the emotional roller coaster that is a very tired 14 year old girl talking about her experiences with violence.

Of course, I've heard my fair share of stories about murder near the confines of my own home, but that's not what we are here to talk about are we? I shouldn't mention the murders, Gang fights, drug deals, and all around spurts of violence that happen among the adult community. It feels wrong considering that I have only lived a short 14 years and 94 days.

However, just because those violent outbursts happen among the adult community doesn't mean they don't affect the youth. But yet again, that's not what I'm here to chat about, I'm merely sliding those lovely words in to remind the world that it's not just one violence that's the problem. Violence feeds violence.

Back to the main story.

The main title.

How has youth violence affected my lovely little life?

I guess we should start with the worst of it in my opinion. One of the two people that I hold closest to me got told to kill himself. It started out with bullying. Swearing at him. Throwing things at him.

Then one day, he got sent a video. "Kill yourself." It said along with some other very rude words I am not willing to type here.

I was outraged as soon as he told me.

I think it bothered me more than it did him.

I struggle to live with the image of him ending his life over some bullies targeting him over his sexuality.

Sometimes I can't help but imagine how differently things would have gone if he would have listened to the foul words that lay in that video.

The kid who sent the video would have been expelled as compared to the one day suspension that he received. And I think that's the first step to solving the problem. Violence should not be punished lightly.

Of course, this was not a high act of violence. No fists were thrown. No blood sank into the floor. But it could have.

My best friend could have ended it all. Watched his own blood spill down the drain. And the kid who could have caused it received one day. One day of vacation.

*"Oh but your best friend didn't kill himself."* You might be thinking, and in my opinion does it matter that he didn't kill himself, or that he could have because some kid decided to be violent?

So yes, the act should have had more punishment.

In the eyes of a fourteen year old girl who experienced this play out, the punishment should have been longer.

In order for the violence to stop the kids need to see that actions have consequences. What those consequences should be depends on the act of violence. The only thing I know for sure is that the kid deserved at least a week of suspension, but even that feels too short.

Do the words need to be written in blood for the world to finally understand what these 14 year old eyes have grown to accept?

Violence feeds violence

Actions have consequences

The real question that my eyes have not yet found the answer to is, how long will it take for the consequences of those actions to happen to the person who did the bad act, rather than their victim? How long until the world can look at violence through these very tired 14 year old eyes and see what I see? A not so simple problem with a not so simple solution. But maybe, the solution has been under our noses the whole time.

Maybe you have already seen it as well. Kill one violence kill all violence. Think of it like a weed killer. Take out the bad and leave room for the roses to flourish. They still have thorns though, don't they?

Humanity is the disease that needs curing. Maybe that's what the world should be focusing on. Save the teens from experiencing violence. Watching fights play out in the hall. Keeping clear of the people in the hallway who seem a little too high to be safe.

Maybe we should be saving the future rather than our past. What a funny word.

F  
U  
T  
U  
R  
E

What a whispered curse on my tongue.  
how could i look into the future and expect better  
when all i see  
are the thorns

the roses full of violence  
left up my spine?

We need saving. We are what's left of your future. So please, turn your eyes from the past of war, and focus on the future. Please let the future live without the bloodied thorns pinned against their spines.

*How could you make something so important seem so small?*

Save *our* future. Save us from the memories of violence. Save us from the normality of drugs passed in the halls. Punches thrown like whispers on the wind.

Make them un-normal.

For me.

m  
e

Everyday I struggle not to snap under the weight of violence pressing on my shoulders. I struggle to hold my image, the girl who is welcoming to everyone.

I watch words thrown at me over simple mistakes.

A retard, they call me among many other things. And yet I refuse to let my thorns pierce their spines as well.

The idea of guilt. Knowing the thorns in someone else's spine could be mine. I couldn't never do anything mean back.

But,  
every.  
single.  
day.

I feel my steady foundation crack. I want to defend myself. To save my friends from the thorns in their spines burying themselves deeper.

But I never say anything.

It's like peer pressure but backwards. I want to save people from harm, but in order to do so I would have to harm someone else.

As I have said before, this is *violence feeding violence*.

The one and only cause among teens is peer pressure. The pressure to stand out, be cool, stand up for yourself, defend people, prove someone wrong. It. All. Leads. To. Some. Form. Of. Violence.

Our solution is simple. We need to kill one violence, it will inevitably lead to the end of *all* violence. How do we kill one violence? Maybe if we truly, intensely, showed the world the things that violence can do to them, and make the punishments worse, we can finally kill it.

But in the end, it's really a decision. *How will you use your thorns?*

Sorry. That essay feels very messy, but in my defence, so is violence.

# *National Runners-Up*

*Leo Carhuaricra*

*8th Grade – Sand Ridge Junior High School*

Teacher: Amy Kendell

*Jaden Cuartelon*

*8th Grade – Sand Ridge Junior High School*

Teacher: Amy Kendell

*Miriam Jensen*

*8th Grade – Roy Junior High School*

Teacher: Maria Georgiou

**Leo Carhuaricra**  
*8th Grade – Sand Ridge Junior High*  
Teacher: Amy Kendell

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**Because I was different**

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

I grew up in a single parent household and at the age of seven I moved to Utah from New Jersey. I vividly remember my first day in my new elementary school. I realized I was different in many ways. I was very shy as a squirrel because I had speech delay; thus, I had an IEP (Individualized Education Program) throughout elementary school. My skin color was brown and I was small as a pebble. In addition, rapidly I realized that I was at a disadvantage in different ways. I did not have a father figure in my life. I did not have all the nice material possessions that other classmates had. Thus, I was “DIFFERENT” and not accepted by many classmates.

My ordeal and horrid experience started in 5<sup>th</sup> grade when a bigger and stronger boy called me names such as, chihuahua, fuggly, and little F word. He said that a Latino boy like me should be treated like a small dog. SO PAINFUL! Now, I realized that because of my race and background I was to be treated as less than the rest of my class. I was to be reduce to insignificant for who I was. Just because I was “DIFFERENT”.

In 6<sup>th</sup> grade I remember going to the playground, I was in good spirits running around the playground and unbeknownst to me the big boy (bully) was there. Because I was running a little dirt fell on his shoe and all the sudden he grabbed me by the neck! He looked at me like a foolish monster with red devilish eyes. He laughed at me and told me that I should lick his shoe and he threw me on the ground. I just run away from him as fast as I could in fear and shame. Now the painful words turned into physical pain. I could not go on with this pain in my heart, I felt helpless and worthless. I had to tell someone but I did not want to be branded as “tattletale”. I did not want to worry my mom, she is the most important person in my life. She works hard and long hours to support me, so I did not want to tell her about the bullying that I was experiencing because I did not want to add stress on her shoulders. So, I cried in silence and solitude for so long.

Finally, the day came when I could not hold my tears and my pain any longer, that day my mom asked me to tell her what was happening with me. I told her everything and she embraced me and told me that she was going to help me. The next day my mother went to meet everyone at school armed with sharped words as a sword she cut the bullying behavior from this boy. She spoke with the principal and the mother of the bully. The mother of the bully with a cold voice apologized and said, I am sorry to hear about this, but I assure you that this will never happen again. Rest assured, I will speak to my son.

After that I started to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The bullying stopped, and he never approached or said anything to me again.

Because of this experience I had too many scars in my soul. My self-confidence was banished. However, my mom helped me, and as she was embracing me she said, **name redacted**, do you know why I named you , **name redacted**? It is because you are my lion, you have the heart of a lion. You have a bright future ahead of you, I promise you. Then, she took me to therapy to re discover myself and regain my self-confidence. Also, I am grateful to the school administrators that were willing to help me overcome this horrid experience and with my therapist that helped me identify my inner strength. Now, I am a changed person, I feel stronger, and resilient to adversity. However, I know that other children somewhere in the State of Utah or in the entire world are suffering bullying and experiencing violence and it is my vow to help end it!

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

Unfortunately, I do not know my bully's home life. But from my observation when we met his mother she looked at me and my mom with a flat affect. I could not feel anything. I am wondering if this big boy (bully) feels this emotional emptiness every day in his home. I firmly believe that a major factor that causes youth violence is the environment. If a young person lives in a home where he/she is exposed to family conflict, physical abuse, emotional abuse, drug addiction, and alcohol this youth will become violent and live in a constant survival mode. Numerous research studies demonstrated that exposure to violence at home leads to increased risk of violent behavior in children and adolescents. This behavior may turn into an unhealthy defense mechanism; thus, "The fight-or-flight response," or stress response. There is no doubt in my mind that a young person exposed to violence will become violent in order to SURVIVE!

However, I am not going to discard other factors such as: exposure to violence in the community, media, poverty, and mental health. We all deserve to live with dignity, respect, and with a sense of safety. And speaking of safety, many people would say that because I grew up in a single parent household I could have fallen subject to violence. Fortunately, I have a loving and caring mother. She is responsible, sensitive to my needs, and is helpful. She thought me to love others and to follow my heart. In addition, my grandma came to live with my mom and me. She thought me great things, such as: raising chickens, planting vegetables, attending to church, knitting and cooking. My mom and my grandma thought me to love the simple things in life (e.g. spending time as a family, going for a walk to the park, riding my bicycle, riding my scooter, playing golf, and swimming). All these things have created a safe and loving environment for me. I may not have extravagant material possessions, but what I have is something that has no price. I have a loving family that helps me thrive in my environment and reach my highest potential. Now, I am grateful I am DIFFERENT! In my opinion we are all unique and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We all deserve a sense of belonging and a sense of safety.

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

I can be proactive in the promotion of awareness and understanding of the consequences of violence at school and my community. For example, I can help the school administrators create visual adds to stop violence among the youth. I can take a stand. If I witness any form of violence or abuse, I will stand up, step in, I will not be silent but rather I will ask the bully to step back and cool down. I will ask an adult or someone I trust for help. Also, I can take the lead and be the voice for change in school and my community. For example, I was involved in the

Robotics Club, Math and Science Olympiad, and National Junior Honor Society. My involvement in these activities offered me the opportunity to learn values of leadership, teamwork, individual and group responsibility. Therefore, I can be an individual that can speak loud through my actions.

In addition, I can support programming and events that provide safe spaces for youth. For example, as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints I am in the position to state that all the activities in my church create a sense of community, where each member and nonmembers are valued for who they are. Service is something that I treasure in my heart because this precious value helped me to strengthen my relationship with my peers, my neighbors, and my community. The environment in my church building fosters a strong sense of belonging and safety for the youth and anyone who is simply interested in learning more about religious values. Finally, it is crucial to promote empathy and respect among peers, friends, family, and the community. Take my hand and let's work together to end violence among the youth!

**Jaden Cuartelon**  
 8th Grade – *Sand Ridge Junior High School*  
 Teacher: Amy Kendell

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Don't Ignore What's in the Dark.

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

Youth violence is like a parasite. It needs a host to pass its filthy negativity to others. Mindset causes youth violence because it's what you think. How you think. What you know. Humans are social creatures. We want to fit in and be included. We want to be accepted and to obviously be happy. Who wouldn't want to be happy? Happiness is an influx of emotions. Kind of like colors. When I think of "happiness" I think of the yellowish orange hue of fall leaves. It's a good feeling. When I say mindset, I also mean our emotions, how we feel and want to feel. We want that release of dopamine. A way we get that dopamine is through laughter. Our humor. Now, humor is always looked at as a good thing. As something to joke around with since it is a joke. Its whole purpose is that it's what's funny to you specifically. Because humor is seen as something positive, we forget it can be negative. We, as humans, do things to try and make others laugh to fit in or to make ourselves laugh. Everyone's sense of humor is different. Some think that some things are funny but are straight up wrong or offensive. That's why mindset is my point, what humans believe/think is right and wrong, positive and negative. What they are willing to do to be accepted into society. Like making fun of how people look, act, sound, laugh, and smile. That can make a person change their self image and get insecure. They start to change who they are to "fit" into society, thus their mindset being changed and so they start becoming a different person. They change and not in a good way. They start doing bad things, making bad habits and decisions, making fun of other people and changing their self view. Spreading like a virus, passing itself on like a parasite.

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

It wasn't until my last year of elementary, sixth grade. I was just a kid who did anything to make people happy, I was so happy, joyous even. I never did anything bad, I tried to be the best I could and be a good example for the younger grades. I was nice to people even if I wasn't very fond of them. I still am but I'm stubborn now. Stubborn like the graphite grey on pencil lead. I hold grudges and hold resentment in my heart. Back then I didn't care what people said because they didn't like me. They hated on me just because I was kind. *They were jerks, something I never wanted to be.* But that was until my friends started taking after those people, the people that weaponized humor. They started saying how my smile was weird, or saying my laugh sounded funny. "Why do you laugh like that?" whilst giving me a weird stare. It really affected me and I stopped smiling as much. Now, it wasn't always insults and gestures, sometimes it was looking into a mirror and thinking, "*what am I missing?*" And I said that to myself. I stopped smiling, my humor



grew cold. I laughed less. With my family, with my friends, with myself. I stopped smiling in the photos. My family loves the memorabilia. So we would take photos often, often smiling. I stopped showing my teeth. They would bug me saying, “anak I miss this boy!” Making me feel bad but never reassuring the fact that I now despised my smile. My dimples. The comments on how I smiled and laughed weren’t the end of it. It turned into, “why does your neck look so wide?” and comments about my race. Calling me wanna-be mexicans as a filipino. Saying slurs that made me feel undignified of my race. I take honor in being a pure-blooded filipino. It’s what makes me me. That really took a toll on my mental health. I turned rude. I started to make comments to and about other people when they made me mad or upset. Very rarely I lashed out on people I cherished. I lashed out once at my friend whilst hanging with them and they said I was a jerk. I said I didn’t care and did something else, ignored them. But it stuck with me. When I had gotten home and laid down I thought about it. I apologized the next day and was different. “*They were jerks, something I never want to be.*” I feel like, after the consistent attacks that others had said to me and that I had done to myself, it changed my mindset, and I see that this happens to almost everyone. Youth violence changes how you view yourself. How you view the world. Everybody, everything, every time. I, myself, had been made a victim of this parasite.

### **What can I do about Youth Violence?**

Acknowledge it. Point it out. Make it a bright yellowish light that can shine through the darkest of dark. Where those who feel in the dark will see it and take note. So those who feel so alone and self conscious can have a sign of relief. Eliminate that parasite by taking action. Don’t let others ruin everyone’s perspective on what’s funny and not. Teach others the difference between positive and negative humor. I noticed that it’s so overlooked. Very few acknowledge the fact that it’s there. And those who are hurting bottle it up. Try to live up to the standards of the cruel world. Whether it’s male or female, old or young, you *still* have feelings. I hate how the standards and popularity of people define if you care or not. If they are important or not. Those who bottle it up tend to not talk about their feelings to anyone. Close minded they are, they don’t know what to do but stay quiet. They just go on with their lives chasing acceptance, stuffing their trauma in the past. That’s why I say acknowledge it. Reach out for help or be the one reaching out to help. Whether their pain stays being on the inside or out, physical or mental. One can cause another. I know countless of people who are subjects of self harm and constantly think about suicide. They don’t acknowledge how they’re hurting and keep hurting themselves. Whether it’s their thoughts about their appearance, cutting themselves to try and “relieve” pain, or skipping meals because they wanna look “better”, they’re hurting themselves. They’re tending to the “humor.” Self harming, in a trance and hurry to be accepted and noticed by society. Make it clear, show it to them, to those who need to be heard. To be known. Hebrews 13:21 of the KJV states that we are all perfect. All different yet perfect. “make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

I understand these people who have self harmed because I have participated myself. I felt overweight often and couldn't fit into the clothes I wanted to wear. I skipped meals and exercised to burn weight. I constantly compared myself to guys more "to standard" and constantly wished I was like them, was them. We are all different and that's fine. Our diversity defines who we are. I like to think that everyone is perfect because you are you. You aren't someone else, you're your own category. There is no one exactly like you. That's what makes *someone, anyone unique. Special*. So please, stop ignoring it. Stop ignoring yourselves, and others. One talk of inspiration and hope can change someone's future, life, mindset. Like a stack of dominos falling down, you can really make a difference. But it's up to you to choose to make that difference. It's your choice if you let that filthy negativity get to you. If you let that parasite take over.

**Miriam Jensen**  
8th Grade – Roy Junior High  
Teacher: Maria Georgiou

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*A young girl tainted, broken, and despaired. Why  
did it seem like nobody cared?  
No one listened until she eventually cracked. She  
was a mad woman that finally snapped.*

*She wanted to end it all right then and there, I  
mean, who in her life would even care?  
Just disappear off the face of the earth, she  
truly thought she had no worth.*

*Finally, she got the help and support she needed. She  
learned to be happier and not feel defeated.  
Reflecting and maturing, her life changed drastically, and I  
am not saying that in any way sarcastically.*

*Of course she is still nowhere near perfect, so, she  
will continue to learn her lessons and grow.  
Thankfully, her life didn't end in that year's August. And  
she's finally happy, to be quite honest.*

### **What is Youth Violence?**

Youth violence has no limits, and death is no exception. In the article “About Youth Violence,” CDC says, “Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24” (1). While this quote states it is the use of physical force and/or power, it really can be physical, mental, emotional, or sexual violence. All of which may make a person feel negative emotions weighing on them like a mountain. Youth violence can occur anywhere at any given moment, and people can experience it almost everyday. Youth violence is a disease that plagues the world, and without taking action to put a stop to it, the mental health of youth all around the globe will decrease. It is extremely important to stand for

what is right, and if enough people are willing to work together to dispose of the garbage youth violence is, all of mankind will improve.

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

Youth violence is like an abstract art piece. You have to think from different perspectives to truly understand what is being portrayed and the often complicated story behind it. There are many different things that can cause youth violence to happen, and sometimes it is not just one simple reason. A multiple number of factors can pile on top of one another which may lead to youth violence occurring. In the article “Violent Behaviour in Children and Adolescents,” AACAP lists some causes to youth violence, three of them are, “Being the victim of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse, being the victim of bullying, exposed to violence in the home and/or community, previous aggressive or violent behaviour” (1). While those factors can be huge causes for youth violence, not having a strong support system is just as big of a reason. I mean, what is a room without walls? The feeling of having no one to talk to during hard times can oftentimes make a person angry and more alone than ever, which in turn can lead them to make impulsive decisions and harmful actions. Additionally, when others feed into this bad behaviour, the circumstances can only get worse. By using solutions that are actually making the situation more chaotic is like using gasoline to feed a wildfire.

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

In second grade, there was this girl I befriended when she moved to my elementary school. Ever since then, my life began to progressively go downhill. I have always been a relatively good kid; great grades, friends with everyone, and the kindest person I could be. That was until I became friends with the parasite of a person I thought was my best friend. I began to lash out at my parents, get in trouble more often, make actions that affected me negatively, and cry frequently because of her hostile treatment towards me. I was completely and utterly lost in life, my mind constantly filled with suicidal thoughts, anxiety, and worry. Nothing an 8 to 11 year old should feel or think. My days from second to fifth grade usually consisted of me trying my hardest to plaster a fake smile on my face and pretend to be happy. After a few years, however, the constant switching of being and not being friends with the toxic creature finally got to a breaking point. The last bit of strength I had was slowly withering away like the petals of a dead flower. For so many years, I never expressed my feelings with anyone. That was until the second day of fifth grade... I'm not at all sure why we were the ones arguing, it wasn't me who liked the same boy she did, it was my other friend. What I am sure about, though, is that behind the argument was

actually a boatload of locked away emotions finally coming to the surface. Like a volcano, many years late for an explosion. I said some things I regret now while we were yelling at each other, but I was lost in a thunderstorm of emotions. My true feelings spilling out of my mouth one after another. A few adults from the school came out to separate our screaming match, which ended in both of us sobbing our eyes out. Later in fifth grade, the cloud of darkness moved away. Ever since then, a weight was lifted off my shoulders. Many years passed, and me and the girl made up. We both matured and learned our lesson, and that's all that matters. I firmly believe we should always forgive others and focus more on building a better future and making up for our past mistakes. Flowers do not flourish on their own. There is lots of time, patience, and work needed to be done to let it grow into the beautiful part of nature that it can become.

### **What can I do About Youth Violence?**

One way or another, youth violence affects everyone. Even I myself have fallen victim to youth violence; to which I regret deeply, am actively trying to make up for, and have learnt my lesson. It is a sad but normal thing to accidentally say or do something mean, especially when you are caught up in a wave of emotions. What you do after the fact, however, is more important than the thing itself. Simple things such as being caring towards others and their feelings can make a huge difference in the world. Small acts of kindness can make more of an impact than you would think. Saying something nice to someone may boost their mood, which can encourage them to say something positive to another person. Therefore creating a chain of generosity and kind words shared. Like a honey bee pollinating flowers with kindness. In the article "Preventing Youth Violence," CDC lists numerous ways to help prevent youth violence, a few being, "Be a leader and voice for change, make healthy choices and understand the consequences of youth violence, promote respect and empathy" (1). If you ever witness youth violence happening, do something and certainly do not just watch it happen. If youth violence is not put to an end, the deadly cycle of people being violent towards others will continue to rain poison on the world.

# State Finalists

**Abigail Busico**

*Clarke N. Johnsen Junior High*  
Teacher: Amy Jean LeFevre

**Kingston Busk**

*South Sevier Middle School*  
Teacher: Lesia Coe

**Xander Clark**

*Roy Junior High*  
Teacher: Maria Georgiou

**Shelby Cook**

*Desert Hills Middle School*  
Teacher: Ms. Pendleton

**Gabriela Dasni**

*South Ogden Junior High*  
Teacher: Bethanne Lenhart

**Andrew Eggett**

*Mount Nebo Middle School*  
Teacher: Autumn Walton

**Payten Gibson**

*Sand Ridge Junior High*  
Teacher: Amy Kendell

**Iszabella Halstead**

*Butler Middle School*  
Teacher: Anna McNamer

**Lewis Higginson**

*Butler Middle School*  
Teacher: Anna McNamer

**Jayde Hights**

*Summit Academy Independence*  
Teacher: Debra Wallace

**Nixie Hines**

*Summit Academy Draper*  
Teacher: Kim Arminen

**Xavier La**

*Bennion Junior High*  
Teacher: Rebecca Winter

**Panayiotis Lagodimos**

*Eastmont Middle School*  
Teacher: Tyson Swasey

**Brelynn Lee**

*South Sevier Middle School*  
Teacher: Lesia Coe

**William Lindsay**

*Summit Academy Draper*  
Teacher: Kim Arminen

**Cole Neider**

*South Ogden Junior High*  
Teacher: Bethanne Lenhart

**Kambri Oke**

*Bennion Junior High*  
Teacher: Rebecca Winter

**Deryk Robledo**

*Northwest Middle School*  
Teacher: Linda Lujan

**Daniella Rodriguez**

*Northwest Middle School*  
Teacher: Linda Lujan

**Trenton Sattree**

*Summit Academy Independence*  
Teacher: Debra Wallace

**Ryder Thurgood**

*Desert Hills Middle School*  
Teacher: Hayley Pendleton

**William Turner**

*Diamond Fork Middle School*  
Teacher: Amanda Burrows

**Boston White**

*Mount Nebo Middle School*  
Teacher: Autumn Walton

**Ali Wilson**

*Diamond Fork Middle School*  
Teacher: Austin Francis

**Abigail Busico**

8th Grade – *Clarke N. Johnsen Junior High*

Teacher: Amy Jean LeFevre

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preventing bullying

Youth violence has affected my life because of bullying. Most students and kids my age are in the range of being a bully or being bullied, like something from a movie. To me youth violence occurs everyday to me, I will get pushed, shoved and called names, slurs and more by other students my age. When I report these issues nothing is done about it other than a stern talking to by a teacher, no call home, no suspension, no consequences. Bullying is a topic that is discussed a lot amongst other students but is only an actual issue when the adults say it is, which is not true. I think it is important to recognise bullying and to stop encouraging it. Many students have attempted to commit suicide or have committed suicide because of bullying.

I feel that if schools did a better job at recognising these poor behaviors than bullying in schools may not be as big of an issue that it is. Most adults will try to stand up for the bully saying things like: "Maybe they're going through their own problems" but that doesn't give them the right to treat others the way they do. Students shouldn't have to come to school and be worried about getting pushed, hit, shoved or shouted at. I think something that could be done to prevent bullying in schools is to suspend, or have some form of consequence for bullies. Bullying has caused so many issues and schools aren't doing anything to stop it. Many students have been bullied if they don't "Fit in". I think a good consequence for bullying is having a one or two day suspension or having a call to home discussing the bullying with a parent. At my school the students who get reported for bullying get a stern talking to and that is not enough, that doesn't stop the bullying. No student should face the consequences of

bullying and I feel I can't do much seeing as most people turn me down using a power imbalance saying things such as: "I'm the adult you're just the child." "They were just teasing." "They probably have their own problems at home".

Most adults I talk to about physical or verbal bullying say that the bullies are going through their own home/school issues. Though that may be true it doesn't justify what the bullies are doing. There have been multiple cases of suicide because of bullying.

I would like to mention some of the known cases of suicides due to bullying to raise some awareness of how serious the consequences of bullying are. Aubreigh Wyatt was thirteen years old and killed herself September 4th, 2023 due to bullying and having to keep all her opinions to herself. Jeff Weise was sixteen years old who committed a school shooting before killing himself in 2005 due to being physically bullied at school. Kenneth Weishuhn was fourteen when he killed himself due to being called homophobic slurs and being teased for being gay in 2012. There are many more cases of suicides due to bullying that I will not mention due to having little time to research their deaths.

Six out of 94 suicides are caused by bullying. It doesn't seem like much but bullying is still very cruel and should be stopped. I want to prevent bullying in any way I can but seeing as I am only one person trying to help this cause, I can't do much. I would like to try to add more consequences in school for bullying. I would also like to create clubs/groups that stand against bullying. In these clubs there could be different students who are victims of bullying create ideas to stop bullying and prevent it.

If you see someone being bullied please stick up for them the best you can, tell an adult, comfort the victim etc. I am a victim of bullying and I have met many people who are also victims of bullying so please spread the word about how to stop bullying in Utah(or other states).



Thank you for reading my message, please consider these ideas and facts stated in order to prevent bullying in schools and even outside schools. Here is a link that will tell you more about bully prevention and the effects of bullying on teens: <https://hside.org/connection-between-bullying-and-suicide/>

**Kingston Busk**

*7th Grade – South Sevier Middle School*

Teacher: Lesia Coe

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**Do the write thing**

My personal experience of youth violence? Well I was having a sleepover at a friend's house and we went to sleep. After that I woke up to the kids crying because they found their dad dead on the bathroom floor because he overdosed ever since that day. I've never felt the same. Another way youth violence has affected me is how when my mom was having my baby brother she got tested and was positive for drugs that broke my heart a couple days later we had child protective services come to our house for a check up, that same week i got checked out by my grandma who had cancer so that she could say goodbye and so we could go home and grab our stuff my grandpa took us from foster home and about a month with my grandpa, my grandma died. We were all heart broken. In addition, substance abuse has been linked to youth violence; however, little is known about actual substance use on days in which violence occurs.

How has youth violence affected me? When my friends dad died it made feel weird it is super weird when you at your friends house and you wake up and his dad is dead I was crying not because I was sad because I was scared well I was sad but more scared and when my dad was on drugs he would say mean things to me like you don't belong in this family that broke my heart I didn't know what to do so I just went to my room and cried then he told me stop crying or else i'll do something to actually make you cry that made me feel scared. There was also this other time it affected me because my friends were doing bad stuff and I felt peer pressured and it made me want to do it too and that got me in trouble and affected me. Youth violence results in deaths, injuries, disability and long-term health consequences including mental health problems and increased health-risk behaviors, which can lead to chronic diseases.

Ways we can solve youth violence are. We can ask them if they are okay and like if there parents or on drugs or abuse them physically or mentally we could call child protective services and tell them to go check up on them and obviously we wouldn't want to do that because it would make them feel horrible but sometimes you have to do what is best for them, we could also help by Interventions focusing on reducing or eliminating future risk factors that can help children avoid youth violence and criminal behavior. Examples of interventions include parenting classes, family counseling, and educational programs. The most effective youth violence prevention programs include a combination of activities.

And that is how youth violence affected me and could affect many people's lives. A good quote to represent substance abuse is "First you take a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes you."

**Xander Clark**

*8th Grade – Roy Junior High School*

Teacher: Maria Georgiou

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**What is Youth Violence?**

*Youth violence is a gasoline can*

*Youth violence is the jealousy of man*

*Youth violence is a weed with unnecessary needs*

*Youth violence is a drug*

*It's almost a reassuring corruptive hug to twist your mind from above*

*Youth violence is the fires that make criers*

*Scared to set off the fire alarms*

*Youth violence harms and spreads*

*It shreds the bark off your trunk to get to your core*

*Unless you close the door and let it in no more*

*Pull the weeds*

*Don't let them grow*

*Set the fire alarm off*

*Extinguish the fire*

*Get rid of the drug*

*Go sober*

Youth violence is a worldwide pandemic of fire with not enough firefighters to put it out. Youth violence is a weed taking over the bully's mind, set to destroy others. The burning is violence, the weeds are turning you into a burner. You get to decide how your forest regrows. Youth violence is an addictive drug. Bullies need the drug to feel good about themselves, they need it to ease their insecurities and conscience of what is right so they feel better when doing the wrong. Overdosing on this drug hurts themselves as any other drug does but these symptoms are difficult to recognize. There are many forms of youth violence some harder to stop than others but in the end there is always a way to pull the fire alarm and not let them in. Always a way to get help from a trusted adult with power. Many people shy away and are scared to jump in the fire to put it out, or too scared to extinguish their own. They tell themselves that they need to figure it out on their own and they need to be independent to be stronger. I find myself thinking this sometimes while I evacuate the blazing pandemic of fire, but in the end more than one person can pull the alarm. We all need to pull the alarm.

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

*Trauma leaves with ash gray  
 Ash of a once forest that was there yesterday  
 The ash comes with the need to believe it can be rebuilt  
 Insecurity comes with a dying dandelion feeding off guilt  
 Looking for the need to deceive with its flower  
 But to only spread more weeds  
 The forest instead regrows with weeds  
 The bully has forgotten what he needs  
 The forest needs a friend  
 The bully comprehends that they have to depend on other people's short ends to hide their own  
 The forest doesn't know that's false  
 The bully needs to look past their own and other's faults  
 They need to find the calming peace in watering the right seeds their forest needs*

It all begins with one person feeling that they are not good enough; this can happen through trauma, social media, friends or family. From here they can either go full bully or fight their instincts and overcome the weeds that are keeping them from their own potential. They sometimes believe that they can fix this through others being worse than themselves. So they exploit others, to find the worst in them to look the most contrary to themselves. The motivation to do this is found within their soul where the pain is most tormented and concealed. You yourself get to decide if your forest burns and how you want it to regrow.

### **How Has Youth Violence Affected Me?**

*I used to hear her crying  
 I would see her forest burning  
 The taste of ash from her forest dying I still see her bully oblivious  
 Her gasoline and smile hideous The bully always acting insidious  
 Until she realized their friendship was worthless The bully was wordless  
 She decided to stop trying for something that was wantless  
 Now her forest is flourishing and thriving all because she didn't let her bully in*

My sister, we'll name Juliet, was a victim of mental youth violence. She is okay now but she wasn't always. We moved to Roy Utah in August 2020. It was Juliet's first year of jr. high and she didn't know a soul there besides one girl, we'll call her Trina. Trina was her age, lived in our neighborhood, and went to church with her. Juliet saw her as a miracle, a friend and a park ranger for her forest. Trina was vicious. Juliet would sit with her at lunch until one day, almost like a movie Trina half way through lunch looks around to her other friends and says in a giggly

kind voice “You know what? We should switch tables” while shooting a glare at Juliet, telling her that she was the reason they were moving telepathically. They all got up and left, leaving Juliet alone while Trina and her friends walked to a new table chattering and laughing. She did everything her other friends did, talked together, rode the bus together, and laughed together. On Many occasions this kind of thing would happen, another being when she showed up to school with all her friends and they were all wearing matching Christmas pajamas besides her. It was Trina’s idea and her job to text everyone about it. Juliet asked kindly while fighting back conclusions in her head what was going on. Trina looked at her and said nothing. My least favorite story of Trina was more recent just last year. Juliet was best friends with a girl we’ll name Morgan. They were nerdy and hilarious together, always building Legos and goofing off. They had a fun friendship. Trina saw this and envied her. After a while Morgan stopped wanting to hangout with Juliet. Juliet could see the weeds growing in her forest, Morgan wasn’t herself anymore. She was judgmental and less energetic. Trina became her new best friend. One day Juliet overheard Morgan and Trina talking about the person on the other side of the hallway that they should commit suicide. It hit Juliet super hard how different Morgan was now and how sad it was how Morgan had changed. Asking her to step out of the picture, turning her friends against her, and spreading rumors was Trina’s school life dealing with Juliet but whenever they were at church she acted like the perfect Christlike Mormon girl and always complimented Juliet to make herself look kind. She would share in Sunday school ways to treat everyone like they were Jesus himself and how to be kind to everyone. She was fake and she still is. After a lot of contemplating Juliet knew it was time to let go of Trina and stop trying for a friendship she unconsciously deeply hated. That doesn’t mean she was going to be mean to Trina and bully her. Juliet is better than that. She continues to be nice without being her friend and that change healed her. She moved on and started flourishing again.

### **How Can We End Youth Violence?**

*To put out the fire, we need to acquire the strength to kill the weeds*

*With the weed killer we all need*

*To go sober on the drug of youth violence*

*Only then will it end*

*Only then will we learn that we are the ones making our own fires*

*Not our “so called” friend*

*We burn our fires by letting others have control over us*

*Nothing is stopping you from pulling the alarm*

*Only you have the power of what mood you are in*

*Only you can decide if you are happy*

*Don’t let someone make those decisions for you*

*You have agency for a reason*

*Don't let them hurt you*

*Pull the weeds*

*Don't let them grow*

*Set the fire alarm off*

*Extinguish the fire*

*Get rid of the drug*

*Go sober*

*Only then will we meet our goal*

This isn't about fancy metaphors, this is real life. We need more firefighters and less caution. We need to fight the fire as if we were fighting the end of the world. The starters, the bullies, the victims, the watchers, are all part of this forest fire. Be the one who extinguishes people's fires. Be the example everyone is looking for, the one who stands up for what is right without catching fire, the one who is kind no matter their appearance or actions. You don't have to be best friends with anyone to be nice and stand up for them. Stand up for what is right, don't let others have control over you, and treat everyone how you want to be treated. Even the bully is human alike their victims, treat them how you would a friend; the bully causes pain to others because they are in pain themselves.

**Shelby Cook***8th Grade – Desert Hills Middle School*Teacher: Hayley Pendleton

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**Youth Violence: A World Of Hurt**

Every teenager experiences youth violence of some kind. Youth violence is something that can hurt physically and is mentally challenging. For example, mental abuse like name calling and physical harm. People who commit youth violence are parents, legal guardians, kids who've had youth violence, ect. Youth violence happens usually in schools or homes. Additionally the age group that has the most youth violence is usually 10-18. My experiences of youth violence is name calling and mental abuse. When someone experiences bullying, it could be stopped by trying to become friends, be nice to everybody, and stand against bullying. My experience with bullying was name calling and mental abuse, my first time with name calling was from my brother he would call me "Star Butt" because I wore star pants, which would bug me, then I changed my hair and my friend would call me "Shawn the Sheep" her friend would start calling me that and would not stop, I had the guts to tell my friend to stop calling me Shawn the Sheep" but I did not have the guts to tell her friend, I stuck with those names over a few years and I could not stand it. Mental abuse is hard for me because it is from my family. I don't feel enough love from them that I feel alone. They say no to everything. They are both older than me so being left out made me sad. One way to prevent youth violence is to join PEP. Another way to prevent bullying is to become friends. Becoming friends with the bully can stop the bullying. Sometimes the bully bullies others because they are jealous, lonely, or to feel better. In The Issue of Bullying by Stomp Out Bullying, The author states that "5.4 million students stay home on any given day because they're afraid of being bullied." This quote means that if the kid is being bullied and they can stay home they would because of bullying. If kids get bullied they don't want to go to school because of a bully or bullies. Second way to prevent youth violence is to block them. In The Issue of Bullying by Stomp Out Bullying, The author states that "58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online...53% of kids admit having said something mean or hurtful to another person online." Blocking people online who are hurtful online could help prevent youth violence. When someone experiences bullying, it could be stopped by trying to become friends, be nice to everybody, and stand against bullying. Someone might need a service club because sometimes they have problems and can't help it or if they don't know if they are bullying. Friends can help



people overcome youth violence. Third way to prevent youth violence is to stand against bullying. In The Issue of Bullying by Stomp Out Bullying, The author states that "Every 7 minutes, a child is bullied." This quote means that in the world not every kid has this kind of problem like Name Calling and mental abuse. When someone experiences bullying, it could be stopped by trying to become friends, be nice to everybody, and stand against bullying. The perfect service club might look like helping kids with bullying issues or kids who get bullied. In conclusion, Youth violence is everywhere and could be solved, from my personal experience there can be a stop but it won't happen if you don't try. Some solutions are to try to become friends, be nice to everybody, and stand against bullying. Even though teenagers can be rough, we should never lose hope, we should be grateful for all things and help others with their problems with youth violence and never give up on hope.

**Gabriela Dasni**

*8th Grade – South Ogden Junior Middle School*

Teacher: Bethanne Lenhart

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## Dimming Lights

I am a flickering, glowing flame  
I wonder why others try to put me out  
I hear the earth etch my path with each step  
I see the other flames die out unfulfilled  
I want to burn as bright as the sun  
I am a flickering, glowing flame

I pretend the tears don't extinguish me  
I feel as if I burn others greatly  
I touch the reality of my ash  
I worry when the rain will come again  
I cry at the sight of fiery love being put out  
I am a flickering, glowing flame

I understand I need dead bush to thrive  
I say the smallest of lights burn bright too  
I dream to carve a path for others  
I try to help others realize to burn their own paths as well  
I hope for a galaxy with burning, bright stars  
I am a flickering, glowing flame

To me youth violence is that feeling when you don't belong. When no matter what you do, say, or think you aren't good enough for others. It's the mean words and cruel jokes that leave lasting scars inside and out leaving you feeling defenseless. It's the fights that happen both on and off campuses scarring others to nothing but an empty shell of who they once were. It's the weird faces, the gossiping whispers, and the rumors that make you cry yourself to sleep every night wondering why you are not wanted. It is online and in person bullying leaving so many to drift off to the point where they don't

want to live. It's when you are trying so hard to fit in with others that you forget what you are or once were. It is these cruel things that happen over and over again being accompanied not by apologies but by empty promises of stopping. Dimming the lights of so many people each and every year.

I have always been different from others, I never fit into a group. I was always balanced in the middle of things. I could be a tomboy one day, then dressed up in a skirt and blouse the next. Education came easier to me than it did to others and I would be made fun of if I messed up the smallest things in class because I was the "perfect teacher's pet" and "straight A student." This left me in what felt like an endless void where I was just trying to find somewhere to fit in. I was so desperate to find a group that I would be accepted into that I would be overly nice to others or would act differently than my normal self in hopes it would make them like me more. But when I would finally get a friend they would use me until they got what they wanted, then dump me and push me out of their lives.

The years after covid were traumatic for me. In a six month span my grandpa died from cancer, my dad sent my older brother to a different country, and my parents got a divorce. I was also having issues at school with kids in my class, but at the time I didn't realize just how much it was affecting me since I had what I thought were more important issues. All of this piled up on me and I ended up going to therapy. I coped through my issues and discovered the ones that were brewing deep inside me from school. Then in sixth grade after going to therapy for almost two years and writing countless entries in a journal, I was able to realize my worth and made true friends. And even though I still didn't fit into a group, I wasn't alone. I molded myself into something beautiful instead of trying to fill a generic mold. I didn't let the cruel words of others hurt me, I didn't let them take advantage of me anymore. I burned my own path, etching it into the earth, and found my way through life which I had to learn is not perfect.

Almost all of the times I was picked on or used by people it was because of jealousy or pressure by others. Specifically, when I was in fifth grade there were two girls that were pretending to be my friends. One of them struggled a bit in school and got jealous because I could understand things easier. So every time I would say the wrong answer she would make a big deal about it, getting everyone to laugh or make fun of me for it. This teasing would continue for days sometimes. These comments would dim my flame, leaving me with anxiety and struggling with perfectionism.

The other girl that was causing me a lot of issues had a lot of pressure put on her by her parents and other family members, which at the time I didn't know of. They wanted her to be the smartest, the most popular, they wanted her to be the best. She always found me slightly better than herself and so she would try to ostracize me from as many things as possible. She would try and make me sound bad to others so that they would hate me and find her better than me. After this I didn't have any friends until almost a full year later because I was so worried about having more friends that would either just use or hurt me. According to the article, *Social Ostracism Among Pupils*, In Israel 60% of classrooms will have at least one student that experiences ostracism. Using those statistics, out of the estimated 13 million kids bullied in the U.S. each year, 741 thousand of them will be ostracized at some point.

Sometimes however, violence can stem from pure hatred and anger. I remember my brother coming home from elementary school everyday looking upset, but when I would ask he never explained why. My brother at the time was eight years old in fourth grade and had just moved here from his home country. He was a dark skinned Latino and was still learning to speak English. It was a few years later when I found out that he was being bullied and called racial slurs by one of his classmates from the time he had first moved here up until seventh grade. Martin Luther King Jr. once said "Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." This quote states that once violence is started, it creates a cycle of hate. The only possible way to eliminate the hate created by this violence is to break the cycle by choosing to show love.

Violence is always a choice that is made, but it should never be the right one. All it would take to stop violence is for people to choose to be kind. Just because there is a problem doesn't mean that a fight needs to break out. Just because there was a mistake doesn't mean that everyone needs to laugh at it. After all, people learn from mistakes just like a fire uses the dead bush from before to burn even stronger. If every person chose to be more mindful of their actions and of other people's feelings, we could live in a world filled with peace. Our communities would be better then they ever have been if we as people would just choose kindness over hate. We just need to break the cycle of hatred with love, that is all we need.

**Andrew Eggett**

*7th Grade – Mount Nebo Middle School*

Teacher: Autumn Walton

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**Be helpful not hurtful**

Some live in fear and some can be silenced by a leer  
Some need to hide  
Some can't confide  
They feel like they have to lie  
They just want to be able to fly  
They fear the belt, the welt  
But we can help  
I heard someone had a hunch about a punch  
The one who got hit had a fit  
But no one can stop it  
So don't start it  
So Love but don't shove  
Hurt people hurt  
Have a heart of gold not a heart that's cold  
At school don't be a fool

**Payten Gibson**

*8th Grade – Sand Ridge Junior High*

Teacher: Amy Kendell

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## David

There is a question I'm being asked and that is how has youth violence affected my life? And I have many answers to this question but there is one main one that has forever changed my life and my perspective on my brother, making our bond 10 times closer. This day started off completely normal. I woke up, got ready, got in the car and went to school. I got there and went to my classes like normal, did my work like normal then it was time for lunch. I pulled out my phone and realized I had multiple texts and calls from my mom I called her back right away she was crying. I asked her "what happened" and all she said was "Colton" that's the name of my brother "Colon, what?" I asked her cause from what I knew he was just in class but I was so very wrong. "Go find him" she told me and tell her when I found him. So like anyone would I texted him and just said a simple "where are you" as to that he replied with "auditorium" and that was weird because he never gave me one word responses. So I said I will be up there in just a second meet me outside the doors. I ran up the stairs and he was standing there and you could just see it in his eyes he had been crying for hours I sprinted over to him and hugged him tighter than I ever have and his slight cry turned into a full sob he was breaking down in my arms and I could feel my shoulder get more and more wet as the seconds went on I sat there for at least 10 minutes and just let him cry he then got called to the office, my mom was checking him out so he didn't have to be at school. I was crying the whole rest of the day because I was terrified as to what had happened to my brother. As soon as I got home I knew where he would be so I ran up the stairs and into his room once again he hugged me and just broke down I told him that I was always there for him and when he was ready to tell me what had happened I would be ready to listen he asked if I could leave his room and I said yes because I knew he still needed space. He was in his room almost all day and the finally when I was up in my room getting ready for bed he came in and said I'm ready to talk so moved over on my bed and he sat down he said "David" and I knew that name so well he talked about him all the time as if he could talk about him for hours and I knew he could it was one of his closest friends. Then he proceeded that David with "he killed himself last night and I wasn't there for him and I should have been. I sat there for hours trying to convince him it

wasn't his fault. I stayed up until close to 4 in the morning letting him let out his feelings on me. Even after he left I couldn't sleep i felt to bad i was crying in my room as soon as he left i was bawling i have never seen him like that. he is always the most energetic happy kid ever and he has never once cried like he did that day. After that he didn't go to school the next day he couldn't handle it. He ended up going to school after two days i think and when he went he had to leave cause his eyes were bloodshot and they kept tearing up he had to leave each class at least 3 times cause of how bad the tears got. I felt so bad for him but the thing I loved about this happening if that it made us so much closer because it made him realize that i would be there for him no matter what.

Now the second question I am being asked is what are the causes of youth violence? Now I think that this is honestly a very stupid question. The reason i think this is because there are way too many reasons youth violence can be caused by literally anything and sometimes there isn't even a cause it can just be off the most random things. However I decided to do some research on this topic to get more information. And my personal opinion and what i researched were the same that physical or sexual abuse are the leading cause of youth violence leading to things like suicide or selfharm. Now with our first question david killed himself because of blackmailing. He was talking to this girl online that he really liked however he oddly enough wasn't telling anyone about her and after his death his parents were looking at his phone, computer, chromebook everything trying to find out why he did this to himself and see if there would have been anything they could have done to help. They then found that this girl asked him for photos of himself and he decided to send them. he then found out that the girl wasn't actually the age as though he thought and said that if he didnt send her a specific amount of money that it would get sent to everyone Friends, Family, Teachers everyone. He didn't think he could tell his parents cause he didnt know what they would say or think about him anymore so instead of talking to someone he killed himself. Everyone in the school was sad even the ones that didn't know him but i remember two of my brothers friends coming to me just really needing a hug and they both said it was there fault and I was trying to reassure them that it wasn't but they then told me that David asked them to hang out that night and both of their parents said no and if they would have been there he wouldn't have done that but i still reassured them that no matter what there was still that chance.

Now to conclude this youth violence topic the last question is what can i do about youth violence? And I think the main thing us as humans can do is always be there for your friends no matter what. Like with David maybe just maybe if he had someone he

trusted enough to tell they could have gotten everything fixed without this happening to him. But if everyone knows that they have at least one person that is there for them at all times it would make everyone so much happier. Also as long as you just always hear people's situations out before any type of judgement sometimes people just need someone to rant off to that they know won't tell anyone whether that's a staff worker at your school, a student, a friend, a parent no matter who you are everyone needs a someone! Now one last thing I would like to add is one of my favorite quotes that goes along with is and that is "suicide is not a destination but a process. It's all about how you drive, not where you're going." -Noam Shancer



**Isabella Halstead**  
*7th Grade – Butler Middle School*  
Teacher: Anna McNammer

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## *When Will It End .....*

Youth violence has affected my daily life in ways I unfortunately think other students also experience, but don't speak about. From that experience I gained some poor habits that I am still dealing with regarding school and friendships as a result of being bullied.

When I was going through youth violence I was in 5th grade. I remember never wanting to go to school. I could never get myself up in the mornings knowing there was always something bad waiting for me at school.

I remember every morning I would cry to my mom and beg her to not make me go to school. My mom would always ask me why I never wanted to go, but she didn't understand the reasons why as she had never experienced the same issues when she was in school.

There was this girl who would make fun of me everyday. She started off by pretending to be my friend so she could embarrass me in front of her friends. I was very confused because she would make fun of me out of nowhere. When I told her I no longer wanted to be her friend, she started to call me names, and put her hands on me. One day she would be really nice to me and then the next day she would be kicking me on the bathroom floor. I was so scared to go to school every morning to the point I developed anxiety.

I became anxious to enter the school or my classroom. I didn't realize how bad my mental health had gotten at the time, but I was suffering because of one girl. What made matters worse, my teacher sat us right by each other. Looking back I can't blame my teacher because she didn't know what was happening, no one did.

Every time I went to school I felt this rush of anxiety all through my body... This has caused some bad habits for me . I still struggle with my motivation to attend school. When I walk into school everyday I still get the same rush of anxiety. I am still scared to make friends with other kids because I don't want to get made fun of again.

Another habit that still continues to this day is always being scared. I feel scared that something will happen to me like when I was in 5th grade. I have to make a daily effort to remind myself that I am capable of standing up for myself now and push past my anxiety.

I feel like something that we can all do to reduce youth violence is by speaking out to an adult, friend or trusted family member and tell them what is going on.

I have first hand experience with my younger sister trusting me and telling me she was being verbally bullied. She was in pre-k at the time and she came running to me one day and said "I am getting bullied at school." I was shocked as she was only four years old at the time. I asked her who it was and what had happened. She explained that when her classmate would get angry with her, they would call her "a bad word".

When I think back to that moment, I think about whether they picked it up from their parents or they picked it up from outside influences like a phone or tablet.

We all need to stay alert of what younger kids are being exposed to in our families and friend groups and what shows, movies and games they have access to.

What I mean by this is making sure that little kids don't pick up on bad speech, behaviors, or any negative habits that their parents, older siblings, or friends are saying or doing. Also knowing what content kids are watching.

We can all make an impact on improving mental health and reducing bullying by checking in frequently on siblings, cousins and friends. Speaking out when something is wrong, and controlling what kids have access to.

**Lewis Higginson**  
*7th Grade – Butler Middle School*  
Teacher: Anna McNammer

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## Circumstances of Victimization

Youth violence has caused many dilemmas, including mental and physical injuries, all over the world which majorly affects their lives. Bullying, or in other words called victimization, is one extensive problem that is commonly found, and is one of the main instances of youth violence throughout the world. In most cases, the act of bullying is a violent behavior that isn't good for youth, let alone adults that participate in it. There are many situations in which youth encounter violence and bullying in their daily lives, including at their homes and communities, schools, and social media. Also, there are many causes of youth violence, that individuals can easily reduce by simple acts of kindness that can easily change the life of someone. Victimization, and violent bullying has negatively affected the daily lives of people in their homes and communities, at school, and wherever they are when they are browsing the internet in social media.

For instance, many people confront bullying when they are biding their time in their home, despite them being at their houses. One simple example of this is the small act of ding dong ditching. This may look like something very small, and inconsequential, but it is very easy to have the homeowner catch those who participate, easily causing unpleasant circumstances like injuries, death, and potentially jail. In relation to that, from "Death and Injuries," from "Is Ding Dong Ditching as Harmless as Pranksters Thing," it states, "In 2003, a 16-year-old was shot [dead](#) in Palm Beach County after a ding dong ditching gone wrong." Owing to ding dong ditching, many youth encounter violent experiences that might even prove life threatening. Additionally, many kids are bullied by others while they are hanging out with the people they considered "Friends." Sometimes, youth inquire about if they can hang out with bullied kids, solely because they want to make fun of them, or bully them when they arrive at the desired location. Due to this, many kids get in fights, in their neighborhood, or at their house, because

they were hanging out with someone that came only to be mean to them. Ultimately, there are a few ways that everyday youth may encounter violence, or other forms of bullying when they are at their own house, or around their neighborhood.

As well as at the house, there are many situations of bullying in school circumstances, and areas around the school building where bullying and youth violence are often endured. In the everyday life of someone in the school community, it isn't uncommon to bully, be bullied, or witness bullying throughout their classes. As found in the Abstract of "Bullying in School: An Overview of Types, Effects, Family Characteristics, and Intervention Strategies," approximately one in three children encounter bullying during their school experience. With this in mind, inferring that bullying in school is a problem, is very possible, and is easily true. Witnessing bullying is a common way to ruin the daily school day for someone, because the majority of bullying is very brutal, and violent, and it isn't pleasant to see, let alone be affected by it. "Being victimized by peers is significantly related to comparatively low levels of psychological well-being and social adjustment and to high levels of psychological distress and adverse physical health symptoms," was written by Ken Rigby, in the article "Consequences of Bullying in Schools." In brief, some major impacts may occur as a result of peer victimization, and bullying, including their psychological well-being, and even physical health problems. As has been noted, there are many ways, and circumstances that youth are bullied, and victimized in the school community, leading to additional physical and psychological health problems.

Bullying and victimization often happens physically, not to mention online too through cyberbullying. Social media is a massive platform that many youth throughout the world participate in, and there are many cases of cyberbullying that happen daily. As said in the article, "What is Cyber Bullying," "Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation." Additionally, it states that one of the main instances of cyberbullying occur on social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or Tick Tock. In order to know about cyberbullying, you have to know what it is, and as shown, cyberbullying is when you post or share any negative comment or information about someone. Social media is a prime subject of cyberbullying, because of the mass amounts of people that use and see each post that occurs. If one pad post comes out, many

people will have the opportunity to see it, despite it being negative and harmful. Frequently, “Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.” Many kids are very violent with others online, and post atrocious things that typically do not remain kind with others. With this in mind, being violent with others online, rather than in person, can additionally hurt opportunities to succeed in other areas of life because employers don’t want people that are malicious. In the event of violent cyberbullying, there are many consequences including the loss of opportunities in life, and additionally, the fact that everyone can see who was bullied, and how violent the post was. Despite the fact that everyone can see cyberbullying, it is still one of the main ways that people are violently bullied throughout their lives.

For the fear that victimization and bullying doesn’t get worse, there are a few solutions to prevent it, but first it is important to know some of the causes of bullying. As said in that article, “Bullying,” by Health Direct, some causes of bullying are because of either wanting to dominate others to improve their social status, low self esteem, and wanting to feel better, not recognizing it as a problem, being angry, frustrated or jealous, struggling socially, or even being the victim of being bullied. Despite these many problems, there are still innumerable ways to prevent violent bullying. As spoken in the same document, talking to an adult, or even the bully, is an easy way to ensure that people know about the problem of bullying, so that the bully might stop. In addition, being nice to those who bully, are a few simple acts that may soften the hearts of those who bully, which may relieve tension on the act of being bullied. Another way to support a non-violence environment, is to try to serve others, and to be open minded and peaceful to everyone. In most cases, schools across the country have lessons that take place during the school day, which help teach about coping mechanisms to reduce unkind thoughts, and they also teach about what bullying is, and how to prevent it. In spite of many thoughts that there aren’t cures to bullying and violence, it is proven that through kind acts, which can be quite small, can prevent and extinguish bullying in any circumstance, or location.

In essence, victimization, and violent bullying has negatively affected the daily lives of people in their homes and communities, at school, and wherever they are when they are browsing the internet in social media. When at home, the simple act of ding bell ditching can

cause life threatening and violent experiences that can taint the lives of youth that participate. As well as that, many kids get asked to hang out, just to be bullied when they arrive. When experiencing a school environment, it is very likely that encountering or witnessing bullying will appear throughout the day, which simply causes mental and physical health problems. Another key point is social media, which is a platform where people quickly and often post negative and unruly comments and videos about others, which can, if not controlled, negatively affect the ability to get a job, because being mean is not an attribute that many employers want for their companies. But, by analysing the causes of bullying including furious thoughts, and low self esteem, it is easy to find some solutions to this violent youth behavior, like trying to serve those who bully, or even try to be abnormally nice to them, to try to brighten their day. Youth Violence is a strong aspect of life, and if not understood, people can effortlessly start thinking ferocious thoughts, which causes later youth violence. It is important to understand it, so it can be more easily prevented.

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**Jayde Hights**  
*8th Grade – Summit Academy Independence*  
Teacher: Debra Wallace

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Man!

Man! Violence has affected my life in so many ways. Dang it has ruined most of my days. The traumatizing moments are the flashbacks. I wish I could change my past with scars that will always last but now I have to live life as if I was fast. Adults hitting with verbal abuse one house or both I wish I could choose. One has kids one doesn't but I wish I could stay in both but I must be safe too. One house with love, one house with hate, call me the scapegoat. I'll take the blame . As long as you don't get hurt I will be here for you. The house is now completely upside down screaming and yelling. Man this is a lot of my telling. The kids need me. They don't have a phone to call even if they wanted to call me to just go play ball. I can't let me or the kids turn out like them. We have to be better to make our kids better than them. I wish I got the love I deserved. It's like I am never heard. Even when I simply ask, nothing will help even if I last. They will never change, nothing will help. I will always be blamed. Falling asleep with tears in my eyes the red will one day make me go blind. The tight shoulders when I get home because I know I might just be alone. The holes and chips in my walls show that I can't control all this pain. It is like I'm out of my brain. I noticed I flinch when someone even raises a hand even knowing they would hit me. It's the thought of knowing that it happened to me . Knowing I am a good kid then what is going on with me. I know I may be annoying kids tell me all the time I don't need to hear it from you too. All I want is to be normal with you. The kids know what's happening, they don't care, they are just trying to make it harder to bear. Everytime i cry to my dad it just feels like it is going to be bad. I get that I am dramatic. Give me a break. I am big with emotions. What can I say? Do you think you can handle all of this pain? Crying, screaming, yelling back and forth everyday. I get I am fortunate and I have what others don't. I would rather be fortunate in a different way. These people just make me want to run away. People say I don't understand but im going through it to just give me your hand. If you let me we will get through it together trust me on this i won't let go give me a chance i can show.

**Nixie Hines**

*8th Grade – Summit Academy Draper*

Teacher: Kim Arminem

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I lay in my bed, my eyes full of tears, thinking of what happened years ago. My head goes into flashbacks, memories I never wanted to remember. My mom at home, me at my dad's house. I was asleep, my step brother awake, in the same room. My other brother, playing video games. I feel a hand touch me. I woke up, but not fully, I was half awake. I feel his hand moving down my body, rubbing on my body. I kept moving to see if he would stop, he would quickly move it off my body but immediately put it back where he left off, I would do this multiple times. He started to touch me in places he should never touch. Ten minutes pass of him just feeling my arms and my stomach. He starts to feel other places, places where he shouldn't. He would start to go up, feeling my breasts. He went down to the start of my shirt, he lifted my shirt and started touching me in ways a 9 year old should never be touched. He would start grabbing areas. Finally, after the worst 15 minutes of my life, my other brother came back to the room, so my step brother stopped touching me. I went to talk to my dad to take me home, right then and there, and he did. I saw my mom and I started crying so hard. She asked me what had happened and I told her everything. We drove back to my dad's house and my mom confronted my dad and my step brother. My dad didn't know that this all happened. My step brother blamed it all on his foot. I fought back and said, "Your foot cannot grab me like that. Don't lie and say it was your foot, I clearly felt a hand." I went back to my dad's house after two months. I would not allow my dad to let me sleep in the room with him or with my other brother. I slept with my grandma for 5 months. I finally had the courage to sleep in the same room with my step brother. Little did I know, it was going to leave me with more trauma. Nothing happened for a while, until April. I was laying on my couch, sleeping. When I feel something touch me, I wake up again, but not fully, I was half awake, half asleep. My step brother was right next to me again. I felt something go into my pants, I already knew what was about to happen, and it felt like I had no control over what was about to happen. He starts rubbing around in my pants, beneath my underwear. He turns me over, starting to grab my butt, squeezing it. After five minutes of that and me moving to see if he would stop, which he never did. He turns back around, and starts to feel my genital area, rubbing it, making me feel the most uncomfortable I have ever been in my whole life. This went on for another ten minutes. He stopped with that area, he



couldn't get enough though. He went up to my shirt, in my shirt and once again, started grabbing my breasts. He heard my grandma getting home so he stopped, but he kissed me. This time was way longer than the last time this happened, this went on for twenty-five minutes. I went outside and called my mom and told her everything, she told me to go tell my dad about it. I told her that I couldn't because of my social anxiety, so we did a three way call and my dad still did not believe me. I told my other brother about what happened and he told my step brother so my step brother had enough time to come up with an excuse on what happened. My mom and her husband, my bonus dad, came to pick me up and talk to my dad and my step brother and me. Of course my step brother had an excuse, but it was the same excuse as last time, so my mom didn't believe him, and I fought back because it was my body that it happened to. After my mom and my dad talked while I was in the car, she came back and told me to never be in the same room with him again. I went back to my dad's house after about two months and I was not sleeping in the same room with my step brother anymore. But nothing happened that weekend until the next weekend I went back. It was like ten at night and I was just playing Fortnite enjoying my life and then my step brother came in the room with his shirt off and only in boxers. He took off his boxers and was fully naked, I saw his private parts. He tried to force himself on me but I kept pushing him off and he finally got off of me. But he said "Fine, if you don't want this then at least touch my..." pointing down at his private part. I kept saying no but he wouldn't give up. I tried and tried to tell him no. He finally took my hand and forcefully put my hand on his private part. I took my hand back but it was hard to get it out of his grasp. He also made me kiss his private part, by forcefully putting my head down. I ran upstairs crying not knowing what to do. I went and called my mom and she was on her way to pick me up, even though it was late at night, she came and picked me up. After I told her what had happened, she called the cops, they didn't take him away, she reported him to the state. They didn't take him away or anything. My mom did everything she could do, to report him. To this day, I still think about what had happened all those years ago, thinking about what I could've done to stop it, I am traumatized from what happened. I don't see my step brother anymore and any time I think I'm going to see him or if I do see him, I get this tight pain in my chest, and I get scared. There are so many examples of youth violence; sexual assault, abuse, bullying, online and offline, being physically bullied, friends not being nice to you, gang related violence or homicide, being in a relationship that is abusive, and the list goes on and on. Youth 17 or younger accounted for 9.9 percent of arrests for violent crimes

(including homicide) in 2022, up from 8.7 percent in 2021. There are a bunch of ways to prevent youth violence; tell a trusted adult that doesn't know the person personally, tell a teacher, tell a counselor, tell a friend that could help you talk to someone about what is going on or about what happened, etc. Those are all examples of who you can talk to about youth violence, but are here some actions you can do to prevent it; not see the person, if it's a friend talk to friend and stop being friends with them, take the power, take all violence seriously because this is not a joke, take a stand, etc. If you are being abused by a parent, you don't want to tell a sibling, unless if your parents are split up, then if you have another sibling on the other side of your parents, tell them. If you are being abused by a sibling, you may not want to tell a parent because they may not believe you and you don't want to tell another sibling (if you have another one) because that sibling may tell the other sibling or they may not believe you. There are thousands of people that suffer from youth violence each day. Since the early 1960s research evidence has been accumulating that suggests that exposure to violence in television, movies, video games, cell phones, and on the internet increases the risk of violent behavior on the viewer's part just as growing up in an environment filled with real violence increases the risk of them. Youth violence results in deaths, injuries, disability and long-term health consequences including mental health problems and increased health-risk behaviours, which can lead to chronic disease, and sometimes suicide. He notes that out of some 2,700 human fossils dated from 2 million years ago to roughly 14,000 years ago, only about 2 percent show any evidence of lethal aggression. After that time, says Fuentes, we see a definite uptick in numbers of sites with clear evidence of aggression and homicide — in fact, it doubles. Exposure to violence, particularly multiple exposures, can interfere with a child's ability to think and learn and can disrupt the course of healthy physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Another way to prevent youth violence is to talk with young people about violence and ask how you can support them. Reach out to local programs to learn effective parenting practices. Securely store firearms (for example, in a gun safe or lock box) to prevent access by children and other unauthorized users. Large geopolitical conflicts create a series of smaller conflicts for an extended time (see the examples of lingering violence in Syria and Iraq). Once major powers leave these contests, countries continue to be some of the most violent places in the world and a crucible for violence in neighboring states. Thank you for taking the time to read my story about youth violence.

**Xavier La**

*7th Grade – Bennion Junior High School*

Teacher: Rebecca Winter

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I think that the main cause of youth violence is bullying. Whether that bullying is from parents, peers or even close friends. Some parents will get into gangs or drugs and will do some crazy things. These things will most likely traumatize the kids of the household. Sometimes, parents will beat their kids when they are drunk/high or they'll do it for their gang. This bullying will make the kids think that they have no other place to go so they'll start bullying others because they can't take it anymore. Next, there's your peers, who can also bully you. Most of the time, it's either because you're either in different school groups or from peer pressure. At my school, a lot of different groups will be like, "you're a band kid, gross" or "why do you play basketball?" While some groups get bullied more frequently than others, every group gets bullied by at least one group of kids. There's also peer pressure. Basically, peer pressure is when a group of kids pressures another kid to do something. Most times, that something isn't really good for you. For example, a group of kids gets into drugs, they then try to convince another kid to join them in doing drugs because it's the "cool" thing to do. Because it's a group of kids, that one lone kid will most likely be convinced to do it too. Lastly, a lot of teenage kids will get bullied by their best friends. It's kind of become a normal thing to say some really mean things about your friends and then say, "it's just a joke!" This is really messed up. However, I can admit that I do this to my friends sometimes. So I'm going to try and be better about this.

There are many ways that I can reduce youth violence. Like I mentioned earlier, one of the main causes of youth violence is friends bullying each other and then saying "it's just a joke." I feel like I do this quite a bit with my friends because we're very close to each other and it's just something that's become part of our normal life. Even though we say, "it's just a joke", the words that we say to each other can be pretty hurtful sometimes (I know from experience). So from this day forward, I'm making it my goal to try to bully my friends less. I have what I think is a pretty great plan. Let's say I jokingly bully my close friends about 10 times a day. The first few days, I would make it my goal to jokingly bully them less than 10

times. I would then slowly lower that number down as I accomplish my goals, so like less than 8 times then, less than 6 times, then less than 4 times, etc. I'll do this until I'm barely bullying my friends. Another thing I could do to reduce youth violence is if I see a kid in public or in my neighborhood that's struggling with something, I can help them with it. I would hope this would make them feel like there's always someone who will help them, especially if they are having a hard time at home and/or school.

Out of the three main causes of youth violence, I have experience in all three. The worst out of the three for me is being bullied by my good friends. For example, the other day I went to the orthodontist to check my teeth and he said I needed an expander and braces. When I got back to school, I told a lot of my friends about this and not a single one of them said anything to comfort me, they pretty much either said loser or just laughed. This really did not make me feel good about myself, especially because I've always felt insecure about my teeth. We as a friend group also insult each other a lot. We all say it as a joke but sometimes they go a little too far and actually, sometimes they physically hurt me. Both my feelings and body get hurt from these "attacks." Then, there's the lectures that come from my parents. Sometimes, they'll get angry about something I did. Like, if they tell me to do the dishes but I forget to do them because I get distracted by other things. They then will get mad at me because I didn't do it. Most times, they'll just be a bit annoyed and just tell me to do it again. However, sometimes they will get really mad and in the same way my friends say mean things, my parents will say pretty hurtful things. The words will hurt for a couple hours but most times we can make it up with each other. The last thing is peer bullying. I've been peer pressured a couple times but never in something horrible like bullying someone or doing drugs. Just smaller things like lying to some people to get better grades or small things like that. This is my experience with youth violence.

**Panayiotis Lagodimos**  
*8th Grade – Eastmont Middle School*  
Teacher: Tyson Swasey

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## **DO THE WRITE THING**

This past August I was affected by youth violence for the first time in my life. What was supposed to be a Friday night football game at school turned out to be a night full of shock, disbelief, and emotions full of sorrow. The victim that got stabbed and died wasn't even a part of the fight. The victim was my brother's best friend and a really good friend of mine. The outcome was devastating and it changed my life and everyone's life around me forever.

Youth violence this past year affected my life including a whole community around me. A challenge to a fist fight, turned into multiple fights and at the end a teen was stabbed and killed. The victim was my brother's best friend and a good friend of mine. The fight fueled by bad decisions that night attracted gang affiliated kids, fueled by rage and hatred that got out of control. This outcome didn't just affect me, but it affected a community of friends and family. It really was a nightmare that we were all living. One minute our friend is with us, being a teenager and the next he's gone. This situation caused me to be more aware of my surroundings and of who's around me, as well as who I choose to be friends with and where I hang out.

There are many causes of youth violence. According to TeenHelp.com it states that, "Most teen violence takes place without weapons, in the form of fights and bullying away from school". It also states that, "some more common reasons for acting out involve modeling behaviors". "Others who experience bullying or teasing, become enraged enough to begin acting out in revenge". This means for example that modeling behaviors can cause someone to join a gang. Teens join a group such as a gang for protection and to belong somewhere. If a friend or a family member belongs to a gang, it makes it easier for someone younger to be influenced to join. From my experience an act of youth violence can start off as bullying or teasing and turn into a much worse situation like a stabbing. According to who.int, it states that, "Worldwide about 193,000 homicides occur among people 15-29 years of age each year. Vast majority involve male victims". According to OJJOP.gov it states that, "Young people ages 12 to 17 who were killed by homicide have fluctuated over the past decade but

rose steadily between 2018 and 2022 nearly doubling in 5 years from 717 to 1409 in 2022". Youth.gov states that examples of different forms of hurting other peers include, "Fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang related violence". A person of youth can also be involved with violence as a victim, offender, or witness.

How I can help reduce youth violence. According to youth.gov it states that, "To prevent and eliminate violence and improve youth well-being, communities should employ evidence-based, comprehensive approaches that address the multiple factors that impact violence". It also states, that "Prevention cannot be accomplished by one sector alone. Justice, public health, education, health care (mental, behavioral, medical), government (local, state, and federal) all need to play a role. In addition, the voices of children, youth, and families who are most affected by violence must be front and center". In the last year I have participated in school board meetings with my parents and brother along with our community families. This means that a way I can help reduce youth violence is by being heard and in writing this essay which people can read. This can give them an idea of which can help clean up schools with better security and get rid of any gang involved in youth violence or anyone in the school and be more strict with fighting and bullying. I can help reduce youth violence by talking kids out of fighting and telling kids that are thinking about joining a gang to not to. I can encourage kids to instead do something positive like a team sport and just be a positive role model.

In conclusion, youth violence has affected my life this past year in a way that I will remember for the rest of my life. I never thought that I would experience something so awful. To lose a friend in such a cruel and meaningless way. To watch my friend's parents, family and a whole community just devastated with such a loss. For a person so kind, full of laughter and life to be gone. Kids making bad decisions and not thinking before they act and not showing any remorse to be locked away for a long time. So much wasted life over nothing.

**Brelynn Lee**

*7th Grade – South Sevier Middle School*

Teacher: Leisa Coe

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*Do the Write Thing*

*As traumatized children,  
Sometimes we hope that  
Someone will save us.  
But most of the time  
We don't get saved.  
Because we;  
Hide it.  
Save me from this nightmare.*

Have you ever considered the impact of bullying on someone's life? Sometimes, you might find yourself on the receiving end of bullying. This leads us to important questions: Has youth violence affected your life? What are the causes of youth violence? What can my community and I do to reduce youth violence? Let's explore these questions more closely.

Youth violence is mostly verbal abuse is the most common in this world and you see it every day in your life. When I was in second grade I was bullied and my friends were too. What happened was my friends getting bullied in a mean way I didn't like that so I said to them the bullied "back off you old grandma!" then they didn't like that, and because of that I got bullied for the rest of that year but also in second grade there was this group that I hung out with a lot and they played the same game every day and the other people in that group were Indian hunters and this is what they said," Because you have red hair you can't be they hunters you have to be an Indian and you have to die every day." Of course I didn't like that but they were my only friends so I just played with them. I was the only person that would play with them and I was to play with them and they were the worst. That was one of the worst years ever but at the end of the year, my mom said I was going to get held back so the people that have bullied me were in 8th grade and my friends who are nice to me now, don't know about this. So is how a little youth violence has affected my life.

*Everything hurts,  
My heart is gone and is a stranger,  
My mind is made to talk but it's mute. I  
carry tragedy, terrifying and true.  
And yet no one has any clue,  
I knew one place, home As  
horror and love.  
My friends I am sorry,  
Can't do it.  
I can't do it.*

I read a quote: "Behavior is the language of trauma. Children will show you before telling you they are in distress." *Micere Keels*. Because some people, it can be hard to tell people. Sometimes I do this so what I do is I will go through something hard and it can be hard to talk to my friends. They can sometimes tell when I am sad then they say "Are you ok?" And it is hard to talk about that stuff and I would start to cry sometimes and the number one reason I would cry is because of that and that other people can be going through something harder. Some causes of youth violence can be "attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder, or other behavioral disorders early involvement with alcohol, drugs, and tobacco low intelligence and educational achievement low commitment to school and school failure involvement in crime unemployment exposure to violence in the family." This information is from the *World Health Organization (WHO)*.

*Every day,  
My life is gone and skunk to the bottom of the ocean Ocean no,  
It is the tears that I cry. I  
am still young but  
All of this is hard.  
This life I am done with and alone,  
But the world somehow keeps me,  
Yet here I am,  
Help me with my life in this world.  
Bullies are here  
To take me down and, Yet  
I won't fall.  
So stop it, please.*



What can I do to help stop youth violence? What I would try to do is stop bullying the best I can and get others to help too. The world is in danger with all of this and we should stop. The people in my community and I hope that we will try to stop fighting at home and stop abuse too. Here is some information from WHO “ Life skills and social development programmes designed to help children and adolescents manage anger, resolve conflict, and develop the necessary social skills to solve problems; whole school approaches to violence prevention in educational facilities; programmes that support parents and teach positive parenting skills; preschool programmes that provide children with academic and social skills at an early age; therapeutic approaches for youths at high risk of being involved in violence; reducing access to alcohol; interventions to reduce the harmful use of drugs; restrictive firearm licensing; community and problem-oriented policing; and interventions to reduce concentrated poverty and to upgrade urban environments.” This might be too hard in some ways but the best that we can do is being nice. Even when you hate the person you can still be nice in the best way you can. So do the right thing, help spread kindness and just be yourself no matter what. I hope that this can get the word out and help the world.

**William Lindsay**  
*8th Grade – Summit Academy Draper*  
Teacher: Kim Arminen

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December 11, 2024

### Do the write thing challenge

Many kids and teens have been experiencing teen violence it's not fair on them because they do not deserve any of it. All the stress mixed with studies then you go home with chores to do and have to help around the house but as it goes it can get worse having to go to school knowing you are going to be harassed or even abused is terrible. It can even get to the point where you hate school even though its not schools fault but it's because of the other people/teens that are struggling themselves and having those things happening to them at home or in other places and thinking if they can be harassed then they can harass others by taking out their anger, problems, stress, paranoia, depression, etc... out on you or others which causes teen violence. Teen violence can happen in many ways, for example cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is a big thing right now. Many teens think it's ok to say whatever they want because no one knows who they are. When we are online we can make jokes and have fun but it can be used in a bad way many social media apps, websites and platforms like instagram, snapchat, ticktock, facebook, x/twitter, discord, and many others can and have been used abusively some people may do it not realizing their actions while others do it because of peer pressure and being bullied themselves. Another type of bullying I have noticed is racial bullying. Many of the kids in the hallways having fun or minding their own business waiting for their class can randomly have their whole day ruined because they are put down for what color their skin is. One of my friends who loved soccer was continuously discriminated against because of his skin color. This really challenged him mentally and he eventually quit soccer because of racial bullying. The type of bullying I experienced was verbally bullying in 6th grade. I struggled with grades and didn't have many friends. I was too scared to tell anyone about what was going on and so it just got worse. I couldn't get myself to tell my parents because I thought they would be disappointed and wouldn't help me. I was

harassed for the way I looked and the way I acted because I wasn't like everyone else. I felt like I wasn't normal and it almost got to the point where I felt I wasn't worth anything and made me want to end my own life because of the way I was being treated. I was told that I was worthless, stupid, no one loved me, and I should just kill my self. I tried my hardest to ignore what they said but it was consistent pressure and disrespect I couldn't stop thinking about what they said and I had to get help so I told my friends and they began to comfort me but I had to confront a teacher and tell them what was going on and what they were doing to me and how it made me feel and then they finally left me alone and it was resolved but if I never told my friend what was going on I would have stayed in the state were I thought I was worthless and I felt depressed that's why we need to make better decisions so other don't go through what I did or what my friend did. Teen violence needs to be stopped. Others don't deserve to be mistreated.

**Cole Neider**

*7th Grade – South Ogden Junior High School*

Teacher: Bethanne Lenhart

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## The Shadows On the Face of the Earth

Isolated and forgotten  
I stand in a black void staring endlessly  
As the eternal abyss feeds on my soul and breaks me down

The pains and evils of the world begin to catch up with me  
As they chase me through the endless prison as I look for a way out  
But all efforts are in vain as I stumble around.

As they tear me apart piece by piece  
I realize to others I'm just a shadow  
An old object people don't remember

Evil surrounds me now as muscle begins to give in  
I struggle not wanting to give up, fighting for freedom but forced to submit  
A tear trickles from my face, now destined to wither away in nothingness.

### **What youth violence is to me:**

To me, youth violence is neglectfulness, and forgetting about the people who really need your help and love. The feeling of being forgotten is a very powerful feeling that I have dealt with and others like me which does damage to the “regular” people you see everyday, like the ones that walk through the halls of your very school or residence. Putting them in the dark, and leaving others in the shadows of your life. This is not a method of giving others recognition. It in turn gives them thoughts such as “What should I live for if nobody cares about me?” Sometimes like myself. Who beats myself up some night thinking what the heck I did wrong, why don't people acknowledge that I have a beating heart too.

### **The causes of youth violence, and how they have affected my life:**

Many young adolescents wish for the feeling of significance and to be recognized for their talents and abilities, but especially teenagers. People go through life dealing with bullies and haters, believing that they are worthless like the dirt that they walk on which

further decreases their mental health and self esteem. Mentalhealth.com states that “when someone is constantly put down and belittled, it’s hard for them to feel good about themselves. Victims of bullying may begin to believe the negative things they are told and feel like they’re not good enough.” I have a friend at my school who says that by being born she was a mistake to her family and far from what they want. She often deals with these thoughts, which goes to show that not just bullying contributes to these things but also their home life.

I have a very vivid memory of her mentioning on the bus ride home that she wanted to end all of the problems of everyone at school hating her and her parents yelling at her for no reason. I frantically rushed home in a cold sweat and as the air ran through my ears. I looked at ways to stop this from happening, it came up with lots of advice. When I wanted to talk to my counselor I was scared that they wouldn’t classify it as serious enough, so I talked to her myself making sure she was okay. So far I have been making sure she gets the love and support she needs, and I know that if something happens to her it will be unacceptable and it will deeply affect my life, leaving me feeling guilty. In the end, teen violence is the feeling of being forgotten, feeling like we are not enough, and it is a difficult struggle to get out of, which in writing this has helped me understand to a greater extent.

### **How I have coped and overcame youth violence:**

Many words have been said to me in the past, “I don’t care, or did I ask.” These are words that I constantly am forced to deal with and feel like a big slap in the face. I often ponder to myself, why I’m not worth the time to you people, and why you can’t listen to me but you can listen for hours to sports highlights, and YouTubers. I’ve been told multiple times that I’m exaggerating and that it’s not that bad. I scream inside my head, That’s not true! I felt trapped and stuck in an endless loop, but eventually I was able to find my crowd, and figured out that there will always be someone that cares about you. It was such a hard lesson to learn after hardening my heart and believing I couldn’t trust anyone, but these people that know you for who you are are like medicine, the more you expose yourself to them they heal all of those slaps to the face.

### **How to prevent youth violence:**

All of these things, all of this is the embodiment of youth violence, and we need to wake up and recognize these very serious problems! The reason they keep happening is

because we are neglecting and ignoring them, just like the people I previously mentioned. I believe that if we try very hard to find the people that require more love, and look for those signs, we can give them comfort. Students, teachers, and all adults, we need to be able to do our part and stand up to these bad feelings. You all play a big part in this process of recovery. Become the person that they trust, and the place they come for shelter.

R.M. Drake once said "Don't lose hope, please believe that there are a thousand beautiful things waiting for you. Sunshine always comes to all with rain." We can live up to his beliefs by being the sunshine that drives the rain and keeps them out of the shadows of other people, giving them a light of their own and keeping them dry, because the feeling of insignificance is one of the most drenching rains.

First, If you have a friend that shows signs of feeling hated, or they are talking negatively about themselves, go to someone that they know and trust, and support them so that they feel appreciated. Next, adults, if this problem is brought to your attention, don't hesitate to act. If a child is considering self harm as an option, you take them into your arms and shelter them from the cold rain and dark shadows that neglect casts on the world. Always remember that giving them time is key. Rushing people may break them down more, so that they may feel like you're not really doing this for them, but also give them space, so that they can feel comfortable. Finally, be an anchor point like what climbers use when climbing a mountain, similar to the mountain we climb as we go through our lives. Tie a rope around that anchor as you drive it into the mountain and rough rock that sits on the steep cliff face, a rope created by your bond to each other, fiber by fiber as you grow. So that when people get to terrible terrible moments you catch them and prevent them from falling into the endless abyss and having to start all the way over, as you hold the rope to catch them, the fibers strain but never break because of their strength. Or be a gatekeeper holding the keys to unlock and release them from the endless prison, by finding the key and twisting the lock. And if you are the victims of this pain, search for those anchors and call out loud for the gatekeepers, because once you find them, life can only get better, and I promise you will get through it.

**Kambri Oke**

*8th Grade – Bennion Junior High School*

Teacher: Rebecca Winter

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On September 4, 2024, at Apalachee High School, 4 people were killed by a shooter who was a student at that school. The shooter was only 14 years old, and had a history of violent thoughts and abuse at home. This shooting was really the catalyst of my fear of school shootings. Sure, I had always known it would be a scary situation, but in the weeks following Apalachee, I would stress about every loud sound, even if I logically knew what it was. I would think about how a shooter could be someone I know, someone from one of my classes, even one of my friends. I would try to find a hiding place everywhere I went, just in case a situation would arise. I would imagine hiding up on the catwalk if something happened during first period, or attacking with kitchen supplies if something happened during fourth period. Even once my shooting fear died down a bit, my fear of youth violence did not go away. I knew that there was someone out there who would relentlessly pick apart every aspect of me if we met, so I hoped we never did. This fear continues to worsen the older I get. Situations like shootings are extreme examples of youth violence, but even on a smaller scale they are important to talk about.

Before we can talk more about youth violence, we have to really understand what youth violence even is. The Centers of Disease Control define youth violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people.” In other words, a young person purposefully using power to harm other young people. This power could manifest in many ways, whether it is physical abuse, verbal abuse, an unhealthy power dynamic between two people, or something completely different.

Our next step is understanding the causes of youth violence. A guest speaker at our school who is highly educated on this topic mentioned that people with more risk factors are more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of youth violence. Risk factors include economic stress, poor behavioral control, mental health issues, home issues, and more. Violence is a chain reaction, so if someone is subjected to violence, they are more likely to bite back, whether at the one who harmed them or at others. Because this chain keeps growing longer, bullying and violence have become more normalized, making it seem less significant than it really is. Through this cycle, youth violence becomes a prevalent issue.

Now that we know what youth violence is and what causes it, we can now combat it effectively. The biggest thing to remember is that even though violence is a chain reaction, kindness is also a chain reaction, and every kind thing you do will make a difference, no matter how small. Check up on people, hold the door for someone, and get help from a professional when you don't know how to deal with a situation. You might have heard the phrase "don't make a mountain out of a molehill," but over time, all of your molehills of kindness will make a mountain of hope.

By having kindness towards everyone, we can help to minimize the chain reaction of violence. We should be helping people feel loved, valued, and accepted, so their pressures don't build up and cause them to snap. Create a mountain of hope for those around you, and help those around you when they are feeling down. It helps everyone more than you might expect, and it doesn't take much time. Doing all of these things will make the world a safer, better, and less scary place.



**Deryk Robledo**

*8th Grade – Northwest Middle School*

Teacher: Linda Lujan

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Affects

How youth violence has affected people.

How youth violence can affect people

How youth violence affected me.

How youth violence effected people all over the world.

This is how youth violence affected someone and their life.

This story begins with a young child who has been through youth violence at an incredibly early age, however that child was me this is my story of how youth violence effected my life. In this essay the reader will read about how youth violence effected my life and others and why it is bad for people so young to be exposed to such a terrible thing.

This story begins with how youth violence effected my life, multiple of examples of how youth violence has affected my life was mental abuse from my dad when he would always do things which led to many bad things happening to me and he would take out his anger on my relatives and friends and would always be in jail so I had no one to teach me to be a man.

This mental abuse It caused me to have trauma and bad anger sometimes and I get flash backs slapping and hitting this makes it hard to do things because the sound of screaming for him to stop stays in my ears which Leeds to me not being able to get it out. Another example of abuse I have Winsted and heard is when I saw my uncle beating my older cousin and my cousin screaming for him to stop which left many memories from the past to affect me to this day. This is many kinds of abuse I have seen and heard to give me trauma is hitting, biting, and beating. which

caused me to never get it out of my head this is the trauma that has been caused by youth violence.

In the world today youth violence has been a big problem to youth children and youth adults, and there for since it has become a big problem, I feel like one way to reduce youth violence is by sharing the stories of there experience with youth violence to spread what can happen, because youth violence can ruin families and even end many things between people so by spreading experiences with youth violence to show everyone what the effects of youth violence. In conclusion there are multiple ways to stop youth violence.

Yes, youth violence has affected me but I manage to not let it affect my life as bad as it can because it was in the past but yes it still hurts but if I can pull through I know many kids like me and young adults can make it And I know that they can try to stop youth violence so if you are reading this essay I want you to know that anything is possible even with youth violence and trauma but you are strong so don't let it ruin your life. So please everyone that has read this spread the effects of youth violence and the ways it can affect people so we can try to decree it.

**Daniella Rodriguez**  
*8th Grade – Northwest Middle School*  
Teacher: Linday Lujan

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### The Fierceness of Adolescents

Youth Violence is a profoundly serious thing in life. Violence in general can affect your life in many ways. In this Youth Violence Essay, I'm going to be talking about What, why, and are the causes of youth violence. Also, this is how youth violence has affected my life, and how to reduce youth violence. Finally, this issue of youth violence can really change how you see yourself in life and it can affect your behaviors, decisions, community, substance use, your academic difficulties like dropping out of school, your mental health, and your lifestyle etc.

Youth Violence has affected my life by me seeing all kinds of stuff that have to do with youth violence, and I want to influence and encourage people to be aware of youth violence and to know what they are getting in too. Also, to know when youth violence is happening or if it's happening to you, it's when people are physically, mentally, or emotionally harming you or other people and if they see something say something and hear something say something. Also, I've seen a lot of youth violence in my life including kids fighting at school, family fighting, fighting in sports, fighting in public, fighting for politics, fighting at concerts, fighting in stadiums for sport championships, fighting for girls, boys, friends etc. Also, Bullying, Shootings, Stabbings, Robberies, Kidnappings, Sexual Assaults, Gambling Etc. All these things have affected my life by changing how I think about violence, I'm also traumatized because of youth violence, and how much youth violence can really affect your lifestyle.

What, why, and are causes of youth violence. This factor is caused by a numerous number of things that happen in life. Also, Youth violence is caused because of a complex interplay of factors including mental health issues, jealousy, make themselves feel better, toxic household, siblings teasing, drug addicts, alcoholics, trauma, there isn't food to eat, parents passed away, moving schools, role models, cell phones, wanting to look cool, bullying, parents in jail etc.

What is youth violence? I think youth violence is when young people between the ages of 10 to 24 yrs old try to harm others intentionally and physically, with a various number of acts. Why does youth violence happen? This issue happens because of cultural, color of skin, ethnicity, racial remarks, beliefs, preferable gender, if you're gay, lesbian, or bisexual, drama, disorders, mental health issues, abusive parents etc.

What I can do to reduce youth violence is to talk to young people about violence and ask them how I can support them. Also, if someone I'm talking to is 10 to 24 years old and is trying to cause youth violence, I can talk to them and help reduce youth violence by asking them about their conflict or problem and how they can fix their solution. It's also not just about talking to adolescents, it's also about seeing or hearing. Ways to reduce this behavior of youth violence you can consider taking therapy, talking to counselors if you're in school, talking to your parents or trusted adults, be included in activities like extracurricular activities, social events, rehab, defining, be kind to everyone etc. Lastly, you should prevent and not encourage this issue.

In conclusion, you should consider youth violence in your life. Also, whenever you see, hear, or ever want to consider doing this behavior you should think about something twice before you do something and prevent this issue from happening. This is also how I feel about youth violence, and I wanted to come on here and write an essay about what youth violence with my voice but I'm writing this essay with my words. Finally, this issue especially affects youth people, it can also lead to more severe problems in your life and affect your self-esteem. You shouldn't let this kind of behavior happen towards anyone. And we shouldn't increase the risk of future violence.

**Trenton Sattree**

*8th Grade – Summit Academy Independence*

Teacher: Debra Wallace

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All following topics and information were my real feelings, actions, and various experiences.

### **The Problem With Racial Violence in Youth**

Being a Non-native Japanese student has been quite the ride so far. It's my lifelong dream to learn the Culture, but one problem stood in my way of achieving such a feat.

Regardless of the determination, one thing plagues students alike; Racial Criticism and Discrimination. Throughout the journey to integrate myself into Japanese culture, I've gone through many unpleasant experiences, and met many discouraging people. Racial Discrimination is what creates cracks in one's motives or ambition to continue with their unique Cultural practices. Ambition acts as a shield against the never-ending irritable pelting of Racial Insults or Remarks. Some people have the willpower to brave the storm. Others aren't as Strong-minded. I will share my experiences, and how I faced different challenges, reasons why this happens, and how it could be prevented.

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### **How has Racial Discrimination/Violence affected my life?**

Racial Discrimination takes many shapes and forms. It's particularly the most potent within a Middle School environment. There has never been an explanation to Racial Discrimination, and for a long time, it's had a tight grip on society, and has influenced the majority of the youth. I have faced Cultural Brutality in many different ways, however, habitually, it happened in an unlikely place, among my peers, surrounded by people I believed supported my goals and dreams.

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During class, I would regularly write basic Japanese Nihongo on my paper whenever I was bored. People around me judged as if I had done something wrong. "So you're a fake Chinese Boy or something? So you're just a Rice-farming Chink now? Speak English, stop being a Ching-chong."

I was told many different Racial Slurs and phrases as if they were swipes at an unwelcome Bee's nest. I never said anything. I was too frightened by the idea of being further shamed than I already was. My mental fortitude further eroded as the days went on.

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Eventually, I decided the stress was enough. Recent family events didn't help to ease the pressure. I grabbed a large kitchen knife and held it to a major artery on my wrist. I stared at the blade, as I drowned in my own thoughts. The main question I asked myself was if it was really worth it. Was Suicide a Permanent release, or was it a waste of the life I could have had? I contemplated, rewinding different memories, tossing and turning within a sea of my own emotions within a few moments. Those moments felt like I lived a multitude of lifetimes within a second. Thankfully, I couldn't bring myself to do it. I sheathed the knife, then pulled out a chair, sat down, then gazed at the floor. I was held together poorly, the tape keeping me in tandem was the thought of realizing such a prestigious Dream, a true Utopia, into reality. It was the pride, euphoria, and feeling of accomplishment, the idea of the joy I'd bring not to just myself, but to the people I love by achieving my dreams, and taking them with me to the summit of the mountain, to then reap the reward of a breathtaking view.

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### **What causes Racial Discrimination/Violence in the Youth?**

Before we cover the cause, I'd first like to share what I believe influences Racial Violence, and how it has contorted the perspectives of the Youth.

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I believe Racial Discrimination has become overlooked by the Youth. Many use it as a tool to gain a gratifying sense of justice. But what justice is there in suppressing another culture? Today, the Media have created Racism into something to be used as entertainment or amusement for the Youth. Overtime, this has slowly mutated the Youth, causing a large majority to lack the ability to empathize with victims of Racism, or not realize how terribly words could hurt one another. This process has made Racism into something to laugh at or make fun of. Most people think something is quite hysterical, until they end up on the wrong side of the table. The cause for such Violent Crimes is extremely complex. It's a concept that I believe is driven by human nature. When you see something out of the ordinary, you might be confused, whether that be a Goose in a flock of Ducks, or a Bull in a herd of Broncos. With Culture, you'll notice how some people might speak Japanese instead of English, and that they practice Shintoism or Buddhism instead of Christianity. Diversity in Religion is something you shouldn't Criticize someone for, but the Youth, and other people as well, consistently and *repetitionally* make the choice to do so, which is a product of the system we covered.

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### **How Could We Prevent Racial Discrimination/Violence in the Youth?**

The first step to slowing this trend is **thinking before you speak**. It's something your parents might have preached about, and something that could ultimately change how the Youth acts toward other Cultures. Before you decide to make a dicey joke about your friends

or peers regarding Religion or Beliefs, think about how they may react. If it seems too volatile to be the topic for a discussion, then swallow your own words and keep it to yourself. Another reliable method would be to **respect the basic principles of one another's beliefs or values**. Religion is everything to most who do regular Cultural Practices or activities. By avoiding defamation of Religion, Faith, or Culture, you not only save yourself the trouble of possibly having to take accountability of your actions later, but also save yourself the grief and embarrassment if that person chooses to end their life.

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I'd like to give a special thanks to Porter Hutchings for sharing the same thoughts, ideas, and Dreams, and my Mother and Father for always supporting me. I'll never forget what my Father said that morning at breakfast. Now and forever, each of them has my respect, love, and gratitude.



**Ryder Thurgood**  
*8th Grade – Desert Hills Middle School*  
Teacher: Hayley Pendleton

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### Anxiety: A Problem That Needs Solving

No one has a perfect life. Youth violence is an everyday feeling or physical thing that youth experience that isn't normal or affects the person in a harmful way. Some examples include depression, anxiety, drug addiction, or trauma. Youth violence is often committed by youth themselves, adults harming youth, or anyone that affects a young person's life. It often happens at school, at home, outside the house with friends, or inside our heads with our thoughts. The ages that have the most damage done to them is anywhere from middle school to the end of highschool. My personal experience dealt with anxiety with one of my past classmates. Youth violence like anxiety can be prevented by participating in counseling classes, talking with someone a person trusts, and making stronger relationships with friends and family.

My experience with anxiety happened with one of my classmates in 7th grade. It was in science class closer to the end of the year. We were doing an assignment that had taken a couple of days and my classmate that was sitting right in front of me started breathing really fast. Then all of a sudden she collapsed on the table and started shaking. I was just in complete shock because she wouldn't stop shaking and breathing out of control. So the medics came in and were helping her. After a while she became more conscious and eventually left the room. A few minutes later one of the medics came in and identified that what happened to the girl was that she had an anxiety attack. This affected me to see that nobody wants to go through that and that we need to start taking action so that it never happens to anybody again.

One way to help someone with anxiety is by participating in counseling classes. The counseling classes are classes that you meet with someone one-on-one and talk about your stress, anxiety or anything else you need help with. In "Adolescent Counseling" by Newport Academy, the article states, "Adolescent counseling is essential for an adolescent who is dealing with anxiety,

depression, or trauma.” Based on the quote, adolescent counseling is a way for youth or people of any age to talk about what they're going through. They talk about it and the counseling teacher or counselor talks through it and helps them with it. The perfect counseling class might look like kids who let out all their feelings to a counselor and they talk through everything and figure out the best ways to cope with the person's problem. My school can improve on this by having it be more clear on what it is to all the youth and make it really easy to sign up. This way more youth can have the opportunity to resolve their problems as soon as they need it. I can help get involved in this by letting the office know, tell student counsel and have them put up posters or have them go to classes to explain it, and pass out flyers to all students as an easy way to start getting into counseling classes.

A second way to prevent anxiety is by talking with someone you trust. Talking with someone you trust is just talking with a friend, family member, or guardian that you trust and can help you with whatever you're going through. In “Resilience for Teens” by American Psychological Association, the passage says, “Talk with your friends and, yes, even with your parents...Get connected to your community whether it’s as part of a religious group, sports, club, or high school group.” Based on the quote, talking with someone you trust can mean talking with friends, parents, or becoming part of a group or club that can get your mind off your problem. Some of the best ways to talk about your anxiety or whatever else you are struggling with are just getting involved in your community. Sign up for a new sport you have never done, or get involved in a high school group, and even get to be a part of a religious group if that's what you need and talk to the people there.. My community has a ton of groups and sports and different ways to just enjoy yourself which can really help your anxiety. At all these different activities the people there are really open to talking if you want. I can help people do this by announcing at school a place where you can go talk to a counselor or a way to call your parents if you really need to truly just talk to someone you are comfortable with.

The final way to prevent anxiety is by making stronger relationships with friends and family members. This means that if you are struggling with anxiety then it is important to have a strong relationship with your friends and family because they want to help you and they are there to comfort you. If your relationship is strong then you are more likely to talk and work through your anxiety and have a better chance of getting better. In “The Power of Kindness” by Happiness.com, the passage claims, “Helping others takes you out of your own mind and can potentially help to build

relationships with other people.” This quote means that having a good relationship with others can help take you out of your own mind and can relieve you of your anxiety for a period of time. That way you can be with people you enjoy being around with and help you with your anxiety. Stronger relationships for youth can especially help with school anxiety. If you have good friends at school that are there for you and you trust then you can always have someone with you. Someone might need a better relationship with their family because you see them everyday and it is important to be comfortable with them so that your parents can help you the best they can.

All in all, anxiety negatively affects youth everyday. My classmates' experience taught me the harsh things that can happen to youth everyday from anxiety. There are ways to support someone in this and these can include counseling classes, talking with someone you trust, and making better relationships with friends and family. If someone is struggling with anxiety there are ways to help. I want to be a better person and help people that struggle with this and I'm sure you do too. We need to all work together to get all these different ways to help out there in the world.

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**William Turner**

*7th Grade – Diamond Fork Middle School*

Teacher: Amanda Burrows

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In recent years many amazing things have happened, and will be happening. NASA announced that they will be sending more astronauts to the moon in September next year for the first time in over 50 years. Apple just launched their apple vision pro bringing your phone to your face, and were even finding cures for some of the deadliest viruses, but despite all that we can't just seem to be nice to each other.

Me being in middle school right now I see a lot of toxicity and hate, but nowadays most bullying is psychological or on the internet. Often kids will say things like im better than you or try to say stuff like your mom doesn't love you or you have no life. There is a weird effect on your brain if you hear something enough you'll start to believe it. If you say i'm the worst or im the best you'll start to believe it and act like it. When I play vr people are very toxic, racist and mean, you can get 7 and eight year olds saying racial slurs and really bad words in generall.at my school kids shove, push and just try to act scary or even use their status or gender to protect them from trouble. And sadly it usually works, i have nothing against them but this makes me so mad at them for doing this.

Luckily where i live in a place where physical, youth violence is very uncommon so stuff like punching or hitting is rare. But I have heard stories and seen videos of kids doing awful things and hurting other people. At my school we were reading a book about Cole Matthews, a child who has been abused his whole life and is sad and hurt. Then one day he steals and trashes a store, and brags about it to a bunch of other kids. One of them named Peter Driscals told on him. After Cole found out he threatened him and banged his head against the road by jumping on it giving him permanent brain damage. Cole is then sent to circle justice, a thing focused on healing rather than punishment like if I hurt my neighbor's cat I would take care of the cat for a month or two. Anyway the circle sends him to this island where he has to survive with the supplies he's been given for a year, then tries to escape and almost dies. Circle gives him a second chance but this time he has to sell his items to pay for the supplies his mind set changes and something in him just switches. He saw beauty not ugliness and tried to celebrate every moment and help the people around him instead of hurt. All thanks to the circle justice which brings us to the last thing.

I have been thinking about some solutions to these problems and have thought of a few. First let's start with the toxicity at school. Maybe we should have teachers in the school in the halls to make sure kids are behaving and punish kids if they say stuff like you have no life or your mother doesn't love you. How we could better stop toxicity online and swearing is to have tons of workers that monitor the speech of the players and ban them or have bots that monitor the speech tell owners or workers about this then they decide what action needs to be taken next. How we could stop kids from using their identity to shield them from trouble is to, A. tell them that just because you're this or this does not mean you can do this or, B. we change the way we teach racism and how girls got the right to vote and stuff, Because the sad thing is I asked a bunch of people if black people can be racist and they said no or when a girl does something the teachers don't care but when a guy does something bad the teacher get mad at them. Another thing we could do is try to incorporate circle justice into our society to help heal instead of punish, so that hopefully we can solve this problem.

**Boston White**

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## Youth Violence

Youth violence is something that I witness a lot at my school. I see bullying every single day, whether it is calling someone names or maybe even physically hurting someone. Every once in a while I will notice that there is a big group of people surrounding someone, like vultures screaming “Fight, fight, fight!!!” And I get this feeling in the pit of my stomach because I know that usually the person everybody is against, is actually just someone who just needs a friend. Not everybody is a bad person even though they may act like it. The other day I was standing outside of my third period class, it was around the first month or two of school and all of a sudden a fight broke out right there. They were sixth graders. Alone, hurt, sad, and needed some way to get all of their anger out. So, they chose someone walking right beside them. I saw him punch him and the little boy screamed and rammed into the lockers. He started to cry as the bully slammed him up against the wall and threw him on the floor. A teacher near my classroom at the time had tried to break it up, and yet they couldn’t. One of my classmates ran down to the counseling office and a counselor came down and broke the fight up. When it was over a teacher helped the innocent boy up. When I looked over at the bully I saw that he was grasping onto the counselor as if he was hanging on the edge of a cliff about to descend down into a dark, lonely, pit of regret and despair. He started to cry, but you could tell that he wasn’t done yet. He flung his arms in the air and started to scream but you couldn’t tell if he was about to hurt himself or someone else. It sounded like a different language, almost as if he was trying to talk to the devil. I had never seen someone so young in such a dark setting. They made him go down the office with the two counselors on each side. I could tell he was regretting everything already...

Jealousy is one of the biggest problems with youth violence. I know that I have a really good family life and that I have a lot of things that others probably don’t. Yet, I still struggle with jealousy. I get jealous of my friends a lot or people around the school that I barely know. I try my best but it’s still hard... One day my friend got ugg, you know the TAZZ slippers with the red stitching, and then the next day my other friend got them. This kept on happening, and I knew that I was getting them for Christmas, but it was still hard. If I were to tell you how

many girls at my school have those shoes it would be about 70% of the school. Don't ask me why I care so much that it's hurting my self esteem but it is. It just kills me that I don't fit in right now. I have a lot of clothes and shoes and all of them are cute to me, but sometimes when I am with other people I start to feel like I don't dress as cute as other kids and that I don't fit in. The other day in PE, I saw my friend talking to this girl and she said, "Oh my gosh I always love your outfits, they always slay and you always look so cute!" And for some reason it felt like someone had just stabbed me in the gut and cut right through me.

It may not seem like it but both of these stories are the same. Jealousy is a fight just like the one that had happened in the hallway. The level of pettiness that students will go to just to get under someone's skin, makes me sick. I hear gossip everywhere I go, in the hall, in classrooms, and even sitting at lunch with all of my friends. Gossip isn't just saying that someone's hair doesn't look good or their outfit is weird, because just saying that will start to go around and get out of control. All of a sudden you're the bad guy. You called her ugly and you called her outfit stupid. Now you know that you didn't say that, but yet when you told someone they told someone else and so on. You ruined their day and their self esteem. But, sadness turns to anger and anger turns into rage. Now, you're hearing the gossip. They're going to fight you, going to hurt you just because of a comment that YOU had made. All of this could have been avoided. Jealousy is a terrible thing. And I know from personal experience that even though you might think that you can't get jealous over something dumb and petty, well you actually can. Clothes, money, shoes, friends, skincare, bracelets, no matter what it is, someone is always jealous. A lot of times I will walk in the hall and my friend will say something like, "I wish that I had her hoodie." or "I wish my hair would look that cute." Everybody struggles with something. Everybody needs a friend. And those who don't have friends start to have suicidal thoughts, start to hurt themselves, or start to even hurt others. Youth violence is not something that we can stop, but we can definitely help. Just by saying a nice compliment to someone, sitting next to them at lunch, or even just smiling at someone can turn their day around. I have bad days sometimes and even when some random girl, that I don't even know, will smile at me, I start to feel better. To me a smile is the most important part to being kind. So even if you don't know someone, or if you don't like them; just try to be nice, help them out, and help them find their place in the world. Sometimes I'll look at someone and they will look so alone, so lost, so hurt and then I smile or tap them on the shoulder. I won't ever know if I made them feel better but at least I know that I tried. It has been scientifically proven that helping people and being kind actually makes you a happier person. So, even if you don't know what will happen in the future, just make sure to be KIND.

**Ali Wilson**

*7th Grade – Diamond Fork Middle School*

Teacher: Austin Francis

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### Stand Up To Youth Bullying

You may know kids get bullied every day, and if you're like me, you wonder "Why must it be this way?" But we can all make a change, we all have a say! And we can stop the awful bullying that happens everyday. We are all human, even with different beliefs, and colors. And yes, some of us have more differences than others. We all have pros and cons. We all have perfections and flaws, and like all humans, we all rise and fall. It's not right for someone to be treated differently from the way they are. All these kids have potential, and value, they can be great too. We don't have to bully or tease because their lifestyle is different or new. Humans have a tendency to shut out anything or anyone new. We can be intimidated, and jealous that this quirk is better than you. Buy why try to change this quirk, or fight it, or make it disappear. We can accept it, and embrace it. Let the whole world hear! But the question is, are you going to be brave? Are you going to stand up and say "WAIT!" Or are you going to continue with these fearful habits? Whether you're a bully, or a victim, we all choose what happens. Or are you the bystander who ignores what is going on. Because you can be the bystander who says this bullying is wrong. You don't have to leave, or watch the show. You can go up to the scene, and tell them no. It takes courage, and every inch of bravery in every inch of your soul. But every centimeter forward is a centimeter to a better place. A centimeter forward where kids don't have to be so ashamed of differences that they have to hide their face But you should take the leap, to prevent a gouging hole. It takes boldness and hope to stand. But at least try, I know you can. All the people who succeeded in life, LeBron James, Einstein, all started like you, and you know I'm right. But bullying isn't just physical, it can be done with actions or words. No matter how it's performed, it all still hurts. We often make that mistake, "Oh, they're just words." But the thought of such cruel words make me ache. Words leave scars too, and they inflict more pain. When we think of the words that were said, you want them to go away. But they stick with you like glue, or like a shirt and a stain. Yes physical bullying is awful, but words can hurt more, they can leave more damage than a bruise or a sore. I remember, I would hear these awful stories during the day or night, of kids like you taking their own life. But "why" I would ask? "Bullying" everyone would explain. I never knew that bullying was so bad, that it would cause such a task. It made me sad. And it made me MAD! I felt rageful and angry that bullying had caused that. I had never been



beaten up by combat, but with the language that others had said. I tried to ignore them, but they repeated in my head. Over and over, causing more damage every hour. The pain was deep, and I felt like a coward. My head would pound, and my heart felt weak. I would feel less joy, and lose more sleep. I was done. This was the last straw. I wanted to stand up and help the bullied kids when they fall. Knowing I wish I could when I was bullied too. And soonly after, I knew. I should stall up tall, keep going when i'm down. And teach kids like me to stand their ground. You should join me. Make our world be better. Make a plan, and take a stand, spread the word, write a letter. You may think that one person can't make a difference at all. But every step leaves a footprint, no matter how small. The fact that kids are impacted from bullying is unfair. We can cancel out these sad words with ones of care. Kindness is the key, and if we unlock the door, we can help more kids than ever before. If we come together to help those who were hurt, and end this vicious loop, the world will be kinder, better, and we can stand as an anti-youth bullying group.

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