2022

Utah's Challenge to Do the Write Thing

Student Writings

STOP THE VIOLENCE
DO THE WRITE THING
Utah

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Committee and Staff

2022 Do the Write Thing VIP Judges

Judith Atherton, *Retired Third District Court Judge*
Chair, Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Jill Bowers, *Author*

Jenny Graviet, *Former District Board Member*
Utah State Board of Education

Matt Hymas, *District Board Member*
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Carol Lear, *District Board Member*
Utah State Board of Education

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Jim Moss, *District Board Member*
Utah State Board of Education

Patty Norman, *Deputy Superintendent*
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Meaghan Peine
2021 DtWT National Finalist

Brett Peterson, *Director*
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Miss Utah 2021

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Wheeler Foundation

Do the Write Thing

The Importance of the Do the Write Thing Challenge

The Do the Write Thing Challenge plays a key role in Utah's long-term strategy to end youth violence. These student writings make powerful proposals on how adults and community members can interrupt the causes of youth violence.

Utah's *Do the Write Thing (DtWT) Challenge* works in cooperation with the National Campaign to Stop Violence. The first step to end youth violence is to talk about it. The *Do the Write Thing Challenge* makes this initial step possible by creating a platform for youth, giving them a voice about how violence affects their lives and how it can be prevented. The program empowers young people in Utah and around the country to make a personal, written commitment to combat youth violence in their communities. The program works because it targets youth violence in the communities where violence takes place, then recognizes that the same communities hold the greatest power to create lasting solutions.

Utah's *Do the Write Thing Challenge* is sponsored locally by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and managed by the DtWT Committee and USBE's Prevention and Student Services, Student Support Section. The Prevention and Student Services staff support accountability, social justice, and system practices for each student. A student-focused, data-driven, systemic practice for all prevention work allows students to engage in an educational experience that results in the preparation and social capital necessary for college and career success and full participation in a global society.

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

How the Campaign Works

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

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

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

School districts reported that over 1,300 students participated in classroom discussions, nearly 400 students wrote and submitted writings about youth violence for review. Students from the Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, Salt Lake Community College, University of Utah, Weber State University, and USBE's Student Support Section staff participated in the first round of judging, selecting the top two writings per school. The VIP Judges had the difficult task of selecting a boy and a girl national finalist along with runners up.

Utah's National Finalists will participate with other National Finalists at the *Do the Write Thing* National Recognition Ceremony in Washington DC this July. Finalists will meet with members of Utah's Congressional delegation to discuss the problem of youth violence. They will also attend a reception hosted by the Ambassador to the United States for the State of Kuwait. Finally, a book containing the students' writings will be placed in the Library of Congress. Congratulations to all students who took the Challenge to do something about youth violence!

The Utah State Board of Education's Prevention and Student Services and the Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee thank the following for their generous support:

> Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley Foundation, Wheeler Foundation, Kuwait-America Foundation, Marriott International, National Campaign to Stop Violence, Southwest Airlines, Utah State Board of Education, Rocky Mountain University of Health Professions, Salt Lake Community College, University of Utah, and Weber State University.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

National Finalists

Parker Johnson
8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine

Peter Thompson
8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine

Parker Johnson – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine

Inseparable

Empty.

Empty. Thoughts.

Thoughts. Float.

Yes, they float.

like a lily pad.

With a scared fish hiding under it.

Little was it known that there was a bear.

Lurking, watching, waiting to attack.

"Ugly", "dumb", "Idiot", "undeserving".

I am my own world, red rivers connect, create, and conjoin the bond between you and me.

That makes us an us.

You.

You mean the bear.

Waiting to attack

Me, the scared, sacred truth surrounded by an empty lily pad in deep water.

Sitting in bed.

not one good thought in my head.

I am ugly, dumb, undeserving --

Stop!

Now go,

Call me names,

burn those flames.

My ears burn like a stove top.

My brain and heart need to feel fine again.

I have separated the inseparable,

I have put aside my thoughts and feelings.

I have seperated my brain and my heart.

focused on everyone else.

And now.

I am in so deep,

it feels easier to just swim down.

let myself drown.

When I think of myself I feel needy,

when I look in the mirror I feel greedy,

I'm fine!

        But

Am I really?

My Situation.

I felt cold but hot with embarrassment. It was chilly, but not cold. I broke into a cold sweat, like an ice cube slowly melting in the spring. Everything fell silent when I realized my right airpod was gone. "How could I have let myself lose this?!?!" I thought. I panicked. Everything felt silent, as though someone had shot a gun through a loud gymnasium. Everyone at my classroom table thought I was crazy. I felt one salty tear drop into my mouth. I could taste my despair. I Saved up every penny I had for an entire year to buy that expensive item! and now it was gone. I calmly explained what happened, and I watched the person next to me throw a little white thing across the room. "Piece of paper," he blurted, but I still went to pick it up. It was the right airpod that I was looking for. I knew he threw that across the room. He had taken mine and my friends' items before.

The next day, in the same class, I was working on a drawing with one of my friends and he took my pencil, broke it on his head, laughed, and pointed as if it was so funny. I wasn't laughing, but it felt like everyone around me was. I got another pencil out of my bag and he repeated his actions. That was my last pencil. "Hey!" I shouted, "I don't have any more pencils, and that is not okay!". The boy snickered and said, "So what? It's so funny. You're being way too serious". Then I felt like maybe I was being too serious. Maybe I was only thinking about myself, and how this could be just a joke, I fell silent. The words fell out of my mouth like water on a waterfall. I wasn't upset about my pencils, or my airpods. Those are both very clearly replaceable. I was upset because of my feelings. I honestly blame myself, it was a harmless joke, and I should have taken it lightly. But things weren't going great at home. My parents weren't getting any sleep because my dogs just had puppies. My grandmother wasn't helping, and she would just yell at my mom. I have a bunch of homework and I have to memorize lines, and help my sister with her homework and everything was just really stressful. I was also struggling with low self-esteem, so everyone in my head was my fault. I get that I might have overreacted about a few pencils If only it was on a different day. Or never happened at all. You never know what someone has going on, so you should never pick on anyone. Bullying is not okay, and that could end up in someone seriously hurt or having suicidal thoughts. Bullying has a really horrible effect on people.

What is Youth Violence?

Youth violence to me is that bad part of your mind taking over your brain, heart. thoughts, body, soul, everything. You start to become your own enemy, then you take it out on others. I remember when I was going through low self esteem, and my sister played a prank on me. It was harmless, but I got really upset with her. Not too long after, I was upset with myself because I got mad at her. I wasn't angry with my sister, I was angry because I didn't know what to feel, so all I felt was anger. You start thinking negative thoughts about yourself. Everyone has a part of themselves that isn't directly shown, and when that part takes over, that's the only emotion you feel until you find yourself again.

What Causes Youth Violence?

I think the cause of youth violence is other people calling you something so much, that you feel like that is who you are, but it isn't. That is just them. You need to find yourself and not let others define who you are. That is not you. You are the fish hiding under the lilypad. You are the true thoughts covered by nothing. You are you, and that is important.

How Can I Stop Youth Violence?

To stop youth violence, I can make sure that when I see something, I say something. My mom always told me "strong people will stand up for themselves, but the strongest people will also stand up for others." To this day, I remember this quote because it always stood out to me. In my situation, there was a whole classroom watching this happen. No one said or did anything. Youth violence to me is that bad part of yourself from within. I might have overreacted when this person broke my pencils, but I was in a bad place at the time, and my mad, angry, and upset side was taking over. I was always upset with myself, and that was affecting other people. I was getting mad at others for little reasons. So, it is most important that you do something when no one else is. If you see someone crying in the hall, go up to them. To stop youth violence, I can try to find those people who were in the same situations as I was. If I see someone under stress or upset with themselves, I will go up to them, let them know that it will get better. You just can't take it out on others. I always had that one person who helped me overcome this, and I want to be that person to others.

Peter Thompson – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine

Left for Dead

Darkness engulfs the last drops of sunlight

The ominous buzzard begins lurking at the sound of pain and agony

Staring in awe at the sight of your broken limbs and empty stomach

Silently drooling to the smell of sweat and blood

People stroll right past your decaying body

You struggle a little longer trying to find another way to live

But you find no light and no hope

The grim vulture starts circling the sky above

Resting your eyes and closing your mouth,

You free yourself from pain thinking there was no other way.

According to IBIS, the leading cause of deaths from 10 - 17 year olds is scuicide. Youth violence can be a lot of things, but one of the most extreme is depression. The problem with depression is that nobody gets it unless they have it. Even if they've had it bad before, you only understand them, when you yourself have it as well.

My older sister and best friend in the whole entire world suffers from depression. She takes lots of medication, but it never works. Recently, we have tried Ketamine, which was the strongest antidepressant that we have tried, but it still didn't work. Sometimes I find her breaking down and crying, and I just have to let it happen. I constantly fear that my sister will kill herself, this is unexceptable.

I suffer from seasonal depression and aspergers. Seasonal depression is where I want to kill myself when I see snow, and aspergers, where I keep getting burgers up my ass... and autism. Every winter I think I'll do better, but everytime it is just too much. I won't let myself pull up my grades because I just don't want to think about it. I don't let myself think about my mental health because I don't want to think about it. I don't let myself think about anything because it is just too much, I need a break. The fact that I need a break but dont get one, the fact that my sister might kill herself and the fact that countless other children want to kill themselves, this is youth violence.

You might be thinking that there is no cause, and that it is just depression and there is nothing that can be done. But there is a definite cause, but the solution is not as easy. The cause is composed of two things: First, the original depression that started the whole thing. And second, the tight spaces society puts in places making it hard or impossible to breathe, when you need it most. These two things together cause all of the pain.

What we need to do to stop youth violence is to leave a bit more leeway for kids that you think are experiencing depression or anxiety. We need personal space when this is going on because of how hard it is. What the people that are experiencing it can do for themselves simply nothing. The key to getting through depression is to be resilient, no matter what just keep pushing and keep living. Killing myself constantly feels like the best idea when I am really depressed, but I remember, even though I don't know why at the time, I remember to just keep going.

"Sometimes you climb out of bed in the morning and you think, I'm not going to make it, but you laugh inside — remembering all the times you've felt that way." — Charles Bukowski. This quote reminds me that at a certain point, you know that you can get through it. You realize that you are going to go through torchure and want to die, but because of how many other times you've done it, you will be ok. It is just getting to that point that can seem impossible, but you can do it.

National Runners-Up

Dani Smith
8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Meagan Dommer

Siope Kinikini
8th Grade, Fort Herriman Middle School
Teacher, Meagan Dommer

Dani Smith – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Dommer

Human Nature

I was always oblivious to the snide remarks, and the ruthless bullying that happens at school. I never noticed the passing glances full of judgement, or the exchanged whispers of gossip between two people. I always thought of bullying as big gestures, threats, and physical aggression. I never really realized bullying as a real thing. I knew about it, but it wasn't happening to me, so why should I care? I've been teased of course. People would call me a "nerd" and "weird" for liking school and books. I laughed it off knowing they didn't really mean it. I'd even make self-deprecating jokes about myself. I never realized how big of a toll this actually took on me until it just kept happening. I thrive on academic validation and when I'm made fun of for that it makes me feel unworthy. Over time I've become more self conscious of my differences, I've developed more anxieties, and I've become a quieter and shyer person. I've bitten my fingernails since I could remember, and now they're ugly and deformed. It hurts to be teased for something that is a big part of my personality.

So, as I've gone through middle school I've started noticing the little things. The little remarks that are harmless and funny might make a big impact on someone. I can see the helplessness in their gestures, the way they will disguise the tears in their eyes that are threatening to spill over. I see them laugh it off and walk away, smiling wide in an attempt to hide their hurting heart. I can see their silent plea for help etched into every crevice and wrinkle of their face. I can see it because this is how I've felt countless times before. Unworthy, lonely, just wanting a friend that they can talk to. I want to comfort them, I really do, I want to share in their heartache, but I don't want to embarrass them. I don't want to make them feel less than they are already feeling because although they might need help, they would never acknowledge it. Just like me. People value their pride. So I don't say anything, I keep my mouth shut, I pretend that I didn't see anything. I wouldn't want to embarrass them.

I think one of the biggest causes of this is jealousy. Kids will scroll through different social media platforms all day long, comparing themselves with the photoshopped and seemingly perfect lives of influencers. This can fuel insecurities and worsen mental health. Also, people are never happy with themselves, and even the smartest, prettiest people have insecurities. So, when kids pass each other in the hallways they might instantly dislike someone because they might seem more "attractive". Or when someone does better on a test or assignment, kids will make fun of them for being a "nerd" when they're just jealous that they got a better score. With this jealousy, kids become ruthless and cold-hearted; they say things that they probably don't mean to make themselves feel better.

I believe that the vast majority of people have good hearts. Sure, everyone makes mistakes, everyone judges, teases and jokes. It's human nature. Everyone's stuck on themselves, in their own world, with their own insecurities, anxieties, and daydreams. This doesn't mean that we don't want to help others. We do, we're just stuck. So, we need to start taking the time to notice the little things that are going on. We need to get past our jealousies and insecurities and realize that everyone goes through this too. We need to love each other, and leave the embarrassment behind. We need to realize that this jealousy accomplishes nothing. We need to talk to other people, even if it's a meaningless phrase, because this is what makes people feel that they matter. We need to take the time to be with family, and do the things we love. We need to take the time to be alone, organize our thoughts, and listen to our mind and body.

We need to stop the self- deprecating jokes, the not-so-harmless teasing. It can make an impact. We need to recognize the fact that everyone is just a person.

Siope Kinikini – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Meagan Dommer

When Will It End?

To do the right thing. What does that mean? There are many answers to this question that should be discussed. First, let's take a topic, for example youth violence. Youth violence comes through many experiences of ourselves trying to get back up, and all different sets of eyes watching it happen to us, the ones they love or even to themselves. From the bully's perspective it could just be a joke, that in order to get friends they must put others down?! To a parent it could just be their emotions and anger inside them bursting to come out one way or another that makes them abuse and mentally scar their kids! To even the people who have suicidal thoughts that could lead them to self-harm without knowing that it won't just harm them, but the world itself! So let's take this question and this topic and smash them together for all the world to hear the ringing sensation of relief, to help the tears stop before they start a flood, and the pain turn to strength right before their knees give out! Let's ask ourselves what does it mean to do the right thing and help stop youth violence?

My personal experience with youth violence is not a memory that I want stuck in my head to repeat over and over because, if it was, if it was...I would give out and the world still wouldn't know! I have been bullied for something I won't change, the world can't change because I will never let it happen! For all I love I would never change who I am because I couldn't, but now ask yourself that, would you? When I was little, during recess I would walk around on my own and sometimes sit on the curb of the playground to pass time. I hated it because I had no friends, but a group of kids would always come up to me and make fun of me sitting alone. On my tracker I had, I would always fill in the sad face after recess. One day my teacher came up to me and asked how I was doing. I tried to say I was fine but then like a powerful river trying to push me off a high cliff, I told her what was really going on and how huge the impact really was on me from those kids, fortunately for my sake no one got in trouble but it felt amazing that she asked, that she cared to ask. Through the years and me going to middle school I realized one thing, though someone may seem fine and/or act fine, they might not be! A kid used to tell jokes to me telling me I should kill myself and no one would notice, I acted like I knew he was joking but I secretly believed the false truths he tucked in the front of my mind! I thought my friend was fine but he was getting bullied for just changing in the stalls before gym! I had once gone to a party and a girl cried because she was being cyber bullied being told she was ugly as an ogre! How can someone compare an ugly creature to a 13 year-old girl?! What makes a person willing to do that to someone without not mourning for them. Not being able to sleep till they know the sorrow you have from deep within your soul overflowing to say sorry and take it all back, for the pain they handed out. Bullying is a big part of youth violence which I know everyone needs to know!

What are the causes of youth violence? Some causes are opinions on others, when it seems no one understands, or even when someone is violent with you. These can lead to effects such as you getting violent yourself, believing the lies they tell you which your mind takes as truths, or even yourself changing and becoming a person like them, a person who hurts others at expense, in the belief it will give them satisfaction and hope once more! The effects from these actions don't just tear down all that

they have for light in their life, but it makes them have to walk in the dark slipping and falling down, choosing the wrong choices in life till they can't get back on their feet!, when they have given up.

Now, what can I do to end youth violence, what can we do? We need to stop these wars and lies going on in our lives! We need to stop the suffering and hurting, help stop the screams and tears we have piercing our soul, stop the blood leaving our skin and the joy and love escaping from our body which we can't seem to take another day nor night with it on rewind and repeat! We need to help others do this and get back up and gain that joy in their life, gain the love that others have for them, and heal them so that they may not fall and give up but soar across the violence nowadays, stop youth violence and never have to feel the overwhelming pain of the deep agony from the experiences itself! How do we do this, is it too much? By asking others are they more than fine, by trying to understand the trials they go through, by showing them you care for them, and by helping them understand that they are not by themselves. Let me ask you, do you know you're not on your own? Whatever your answer is, trust me, we're all in this together and we can overcome youth violence for I did and am still doing, but in order to do the right thing we have to help each other. When will it end, you ask? When we choose it too.

State Finalists

Nathan Abarca
7th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda Lujan

Henry Armentrout
8th Grade, Treasure Mountain Junior High
Teacher, Laura Hughes

Benson Ballard
7th Grade, Lehi Junior High
Teacher, Chancellor Carter

Nikita Bumpers-Scott
8th Grade, South Ogden Junior High
Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine

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

Victor Chaston
8th Grade, Roy Junior High
Teacher, Dustin Flores

Bentley Corona
8th Grade, Valley Junior High
Teacher, DeMarie Hoover

Jasmine De Luna
8th Grade, Valley Junior High
Teacher, DeMarie Hoover

Beck Erickson
7th Grade, Diamond Fork Middle School
Teacher, Reilly Ryan

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

Samuel Gertge
8th Grade, North Layton Junior High
Teacher, Savannah Lund

Nik Harper
8th Grade, The Terra Academy
Teacher, Crystal Allen

Jackson Hughes
8th Grade, Summit Academy- Draper
Teacher, Heidi Stone

Hazel Jonas
7th Grade, Canyons Online Middle School
Teacher, Mariah Higgins

Kayla Kunz
7th Grade, Butler Middle School
Teacher, Anna McNamer

Gwen Lloyd
8th Grade, North Layton Junior HIgh
Teacher, Savannah Lund

Gabriella Long
8th Grade, The Terra Academy
Teacher, Crystal Allen

Emmet Lurth
7th Grade, Minersville School
Teacher, Many Jones

Jersee Marshall
8th Grade, Minersville School
Teacher, Mandy Jones

Destini Masters
8th Grade, Roy Junior High
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Teacher, Kim Arminen

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Teacher, Larissa Fomuke

Elizabeth Robinson
8th Grade, Desert hills Middle School
Teacher, Michaela Streeter

Addyson Rushton
8th Grade, Copper Mountain Middle School
Teacher, Alisha Wheeler

Aimee Sapp
8th Grade, Hurricane Middle School
Teacher, Melissa Riach

Siosefa-Anthony Toki
8th Grade, Copper Mountain Middle School
Teacher, Alisha Wheeler

Taylee Tolman
7h Grade, Lehi Junior High
Teacher, Chancellor Carter

Maximilian Tunbridge
7th Grade, Butler Middle School
Teacher, Anna McNamer

Lilith Valadez
7th Grade, TH Bell Junior High School
Teacher, Jennifer Duke

Marie Woolston
7th Grade, Diamond Fork Middle School
Teacher, Rachel Stanger

Nathan Abarca – 7th Grade
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan

MY EXPERIENCE WITH YOUTH VIOLENCE

Since I was younger, we have always had to be careful around the neighborhood because when I was little my mom was robbed at the atm while me and my siblings where in the car. Which proved to my parents that we must be careful around our neighborhood Also, since my family is full of Mexicans, we must be more careful around cops, which is caused by the racism in this country which will probably never change but could decrease.

Another relevant example of youth violence is when someone shot at my neighbor's house this happened a few weeks ago or a month ago. This happened because of problems the man had as a teen. It happened when I was walking home from school and I was on my street close to my house, and there was a red car that was going down my street from the opposite direction, the person shot at a house that was across from my neighbors and speeded off. After it happened, I quickly walked to my house I then went inside and decided if what I heard was a gun shot. Also this was not the first time it happened, this was the third time it has happened but the other two times it was at night and this time it was during the day. The fact that it happened in plain daylight made my family concerned because now the people that shot the house don't care when it happens.

My opinion on youth violence is that it could decrease but it probably won't disappear for good which is what my family and I believe. I have not really had that many experiences with youth violence maybe the usual stuff like people doing drugs at school, vaping and that's all I really see at school. This mostly starts because kids don't get enough attention at home and are not told write from wrong. They are also not disciplined and not told things to help refuse drugs or to occupy themselves instead of goofing off in school and getting suspended. Drawing from my experience with youth violence, I know that not everyone is exposed to it and can control youth violence by who they are surrounded by. Youth violence isn't always friends doing something illegal or bad it can sometimes be your family; youth violence may also be common in your community. One thing I know is that youth violence is everywhere you go and sometimes worse in some places than others.

I think that we can see why it is less in some places than it is in other places and fix the problems in those countries, states, or communities. One thing that might help is that Schools can also add after school programs if they don't have any. Another thing schools can do is start clubs and have sports so that kids can distract themselves from doing bad and get away from home if for some reason they don't want to go home. We can also have things that people can do as a community like have parties or book clubs. Also, we could have events at school like soccer games, basketball games or have the bands at the schools preform. Other things that schools could do to help stop youth violence is to have

security at schools.

One thing that I think causes youth violence or starts the problem is kids trying to get attention, act cool or problems at home. Youth violence also could be kids getting hurt by being at the wrong place at the wrong time. It can also be kids selling drugs or other things that could end with them having to be careful who they give it to or who they get it from. Another thing that could be considered as youth violence is kids hanging around with the wrong group of people and getting in trouble for something they did or getting the wrong people mad at you. From my perspective I don't really get mixed in that stuff but also don't try to get on people's bad sides or be friends with the wrong people.

In summary I thought about what experiences I've had that relates to youth violence, what causes youth violence and how we can stop it. Another thing I did in the paragraphs is explain why I think certain things and why I think it affects youth violence. I also explained how we can stop it or have less of it in our communities. Also, I talked about how youth violence affected me. From my perspective I think if we looked at all of the paragraphs and did something about every problem and every solution, we have we can make youth violence almost go away.

Henry Armentrout – 8th Grade
Treasure Mountain Junior High - Teacher, Laura Hughes

Youth violence has become a big problem in schools across the United States. Kids are impacted by it every single day. But first, what are the causes of youth violence? There are many causes of youth violence, Including Social media usage. "Research indicates that violence in the media influences teens and can cause them to act aggressively." (Witmer). In addition to Social media, abusive behavior can also be caused by poor living conditions, or problems in everyday life. "Some people use violence to release feelings of anger or frustration. They think there are no answers to their problems and turn to violence to express their out-of-control emotions." (Warning signs). To simplify, those are some of the causes of youth violence.

It is not only important to know what can cause youth violence, but also understand the effects it can have on teens. Violence can have many long term serious effects on teens and communities. After experiencing youth violence, school might not feel safe anymore. "Teens who experience violence have several health conditions and risk behaviors, including: Missed school due to safety concerns, Low academic grades, Carried a weapon, or Suicidal thoughts or behavior" (violence). It can also make it more difficult to learn in school, and can make teens depressed. "Experiencing youth violence can harm development and contribute to impaired decision-making, learning challenges, decreased connections to peers and adults, and trouble coping with stress" (Preventing). Experiencing violence in most cases will negatively impact someone for their entire lives; not just during school. As shown above, those are some of the effects of youth violence, and why it is so serious.

So now that we have learned some of the causes and effects of youth violence, how can we reduce youth violence? The key is to stop youth violence before it even happens. If someone is acting aggressively towards another teen, please report it to a trusted adult or teacher. This will help stop youth violence before it can even occur. Society can help by providing more options of care for kids who have already suffered from violence. "Communities can improve detection of and services for mental illness in families, provide more recreational and career opportunities, and decrease the availability of drugs and weapons" (Kisicki). In other words, communities can provide options like therapy and trauma-informed care. "Organizational trauma-informed care that is grounded in an understanding of the causes and consequences of trauma can promote resilience and healing, while reducing youth violence" (Violence prevention). Even a simple compliment can help prevent youth violence. In the long run, those are some of the ways we can help prevent youth violence.

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Benson Ballard – 7th Grade
Lehi Junior High – Teacher, Chancellor Carter

Youth bullying is a very serious problem in today's world. According to Pacers Bullying Prevention Center "49.8 % of tweens (ages 9-12) report being bullied". To help end youth violence I think being nicer to the bullies and standing up for yourself would make them stop. Once at my school during lunch there were a few kids who stole another kid's backpack and were running around with it and he was trying to get it. Finally another kid got it from them and gave it back, when the principal walked by and saw this he asked how the kid that was bullying was doing. I don't know how that affected the kid, but if I was that kid I would probably change something for the better.

I haven't really had any accounts of bullying, but maybe that is because I would stand up for myself. Also many bullies might just be misunderstood. My brother sometimes comes home from school talking about how some people were bullying him like chasing him at recess, or taking the ball from him. I think that to them that is the way they want to play they just realize that they are hurting other people's feelings, this probably happens to everyone at some point in their life, and a solution could be making them aware that you don't like what they are doing.

Some reasons for bullying are bad things happening to them or someone else close to them, like a family member or friend. According to the World Health Organization some main causes of bullying may have started with family issues such as "Poor supervision of children by parents, and harsh physical punishment to discipline children, parental conflict in early childhood, and experiencing parental separation or divorce at an early age". Not all cases of bullying have to do with problems in their home, but many do, so we should be aware of that. For example if a kid gets treated poorly at home, let's say that the child had harsh physical discipline at a young age such as being hit, he might grow up to become a bully and do those same things

Three things that can be done against youth violence mentioned by CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) are first, build strong bonds between staff and students at a school. If students believe that teachers are there to help them not make them miserable, that will help their outlook on life "Teach teenagers to navigate social and emotional challenges" school is a good place to teach students what to do in some social and emotional challenges because that is where lots of bullying goes on and where students spend most of their day. The last one is to "create a safe environment for students" if you make school a safe place without bullies then students are less likely to become bullies themselves, school is not a safe place for kids then they are likely to not go, or go and bully other kids.

In conclusion, some of the causes of youth violence are problems at home, they might be able to be solved by building strong bonds between students and teachers, teaching teens to navigate social and emotional challenges, and to create a safe environment for the students. I will try to end youth bullying anywhere that I see it happen.

Nikita Bumpers-Scott – 8th Grade
South Ogden Junior High – Teacher, Kimberlee Irvine

(In second person)

(Him)

She lies in her bed,

light vermilion blankets

covering her body.

Fear

Rushed

through her veins

like adrenaline for the next day.

Memories of his deep, dark steps

Approaching her room,

Dreams of how he

ripped her pride away

at such a young age.

sadness and fear

Was all she could feel.

The bed hugs her sore,

numb body full

of scars and cuts

as black tears from makeup

make their way

down her cheek

and stain her white pillow.

She remembers what he did.

How he touched her and raped

her in her own house

for years,

while she was 'asleep.'

Anxiety

overcomes her as she bites her lips

till they're a cherry red.

 She'll stare at her phone blankly

 as it distracts her

 from the thoughts

of her silent screams

as if she was isolated in a room ↓

with no windows, or doors.

She'd wonder

 how tomorrow will go

 with seeing her cousin

again at school.

        Tears were falling down one by one

from her coffee brown eyes,

Rolling down her cheek in silence.

Her body felt like a candle,

melting and burning.

She's fading away.

Maybe it was all her fault.

Was her 11-13 year old body provoking him?

Was she showing to much skin in

A hoodie and a pair of shorts.

Or was he just sick?

Maybe his mother should have taught him better.

But it was not her fault.

All this happened because of

Him!

Youth violence can be caused by any thinkable thing ever. It's a child being rude to another, it's an adult mistreating a kid. It's a lost child who urns for love and acceptance, but can't show it. Its a family member sexually hurting someone else, causing trauma. Like what happened to me.   Something that has helped me through this part of my life was my family. I want everyone who's been in my situation to know it's okay to speak up and spread your story. If it has happened to you it isn't your fault at all. Therapy is a great option, or having a friend, close family member, or any trusted adult to talk to. I think a way that we could stop this stuff from happening is we need to stop shaming girls for what they wear. We should completely be able to wear a tank top, or a crop top without fearing what ´Boys are thinking.´´Most of the time boys aren't thinking about anything. Instead of shaming girls for clothing we need to teach boys and men how to not touch. We could also prevent things like this from happening by encouraging girls to speak up when they're uncomfortable so we can get them out of that situation. We need to stop telling people ´ You're asking for it.´ Speak up about your situation and don't let them get away with what they did. If you ever need inspiration to speak up or share your story, a quote I repeat to myself when I feel guilty for speaking up is;

´You're not a victim for sharing your story. You're a survivor setting the world on fire with your truth, and you never know who needs your light, your warmth, and your ranging courage.´ -Alex Elle

Never shame or allow yourself to be shamed for anyone's or your own traumatic experiences. If you're scared, let me be your inspiration. A 11-13 year old girl who was scared to tell on her cousin, and winning a battle she fights everyday.

Lucy Carver – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Ashley Hauber

Title: Hope for the Unseen

We all have our moments

Both good and bad

We all look at ourselves and think

Can I really look this ugly?

Well truth is you can't

Because that ugly doesn't exist

It's just what people want you to think

That you have to wear this or that We

all face the judgement

The harsh look on other's faces

And we think to ourselves

Why this of all places?

Because compared to others,

We want to look good

We stand by the weak

So we can look strong

But I have a story

One that no one can understand

At least that's what my brain says

But really, everyone understands

See there's these things I call waves

They stand really tall

Something I wish I could do

Despite that fact that I'm not short at all

But these waves are different

They're full of envy and hate

People cower under them

Just to avoid their sad fate

I've seen them before

Those people I mean

In school they sat alone

They were lonely and unseen

I would walk right past them

But little did I know

I would become like those people

It just took a small sec

So one day I stood on a cliff

Watching the people under the waves

Until someone came and joined me

And they pushed me right off

I kept falling and falling until I fell in the water

The cold, scary feeling had left me shaken

But I didn't climb back up

No I didn't even try

I just stayed there

Drifting further out to sea

Until I reached my fate

Under those waves of greed

But something was keeping me

From drowning so deep

I kept kicking and breathing

In fear of my fate

But I would say a word

I wouldn't scream or shout

I just stayed quiet

While I stayed above the water

They kept crashing on me

Wave after wave

But I wouldn't give up

At least not yet

I was holding myself up

Without any help

And eventually, I saw that sunken titanic

The one that the waves had made panic

Cause eventually your body gives out

Your legs stop kicking

And your lungs stop breathing

And the waves don't stop crashing

So as I started to fall

My body let out a scream

A cry

And it wasn't very loud

But that cry was heard

It was heard loud and clear

And a hand reached out to me

And pulled me from my fate

The hand was so strong

The grip was so tight

Coming from a ship bigger than the titanic

I was pulled out and saved

So on this day

I had learned a good lesson

When you are sad

And struggle with depression

You tend to keep quiet

You often keep still

And nobody hears you

So you seem to fall ill

Of the things you hold inside

The things you don't want to let out

But if you just give a sound

Doesn't have to be loud

Then someone will hear you

Someone will come

Someone will see you

They will comfort you, not run

You keep silent,

so do I

And that's what leads us

To fall off that cliff

To drown in the ocean

To be hit by harder waves

To use every aching muscle

To try and still not be saved

We all get too fed up in our own situations, our own lives, our own thoughts that we forget to see other people. They fade in our sight. They're right in front of us but we don't see them. They're drowning but we don't save them. Why? Because they keep quiet and so do we. Nobody reaches out to ask how someone is doing. We don't even ask ourselves how we're doing. We don't check up on each other, and we don't check up on ourselves. What we need to do is look at the surrounding waters and see the person with the constant waves hitting them. The constant waves of hatred, bullying, words, and depression. We need to check on ourselves and see, we are not alone. If we ask someone, if we tell someone they will listen. And when someone comes to us saying that they are struggling, don't just listen but do something. We can listen and talk all we want but sometimes, that's just not enough. We

need to really reach and pull them out of the water. We need to help them, not just see them. You can't save someone from the waves of life by just watching, you need to get down in there yourself, see what they see, and pull them out with your own, physical hand.

Victor Chaston – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High - Teacher, Dustin Flores

More than 20.8% of students have reported being bullied. Bullying is a form of violence. That means that in a group of five people, one of them has been bullied. In a typical elementary school class, that means there are five or six students who are being bullied. This is not a problem that is just small or that will just go away on its own.

Back in elementary school, I was bullied. I have personal experience being that one kid in a group of five. A lot of people bullied me, but there was this one person who did it the most. This person was one of the most popular people in the school, and her friends felt like they were part of her group when they bullied me. When people treated me nicely, I saw that the bully didn't want to be friends with them. When a teacher tried to put us in the same group for something, the person would not talk to, look at, or work with me. In my case, she used bullying to become popular or as a way to choose her friends. This resulted in peer pressure on other people to join her in the bullying. Some people who normally would be nice were peer pressured into joining in on the bullying. I believe negative peer pressure is a major cause of youth violence.

Being bullied affected my life. Many times I felt bad about myself or didn't want to go to school. I tried to avoid my bully and her friends all the time. It took effort to stay away from them. I didn't like what it did to my life. So I decided to do something about it. It made me want to make a change for the better in the world.

After I was bullied, I noticed when other people were being bullied. I knew how it felt to be them, and I felt bad for them. This means I had empathy for them. Sometimes I think it takes empathy to see a problem. A problem cannot be solved until it is first recognized. Because of my experience in elementary school, I decided to join Hope Squad in junior high school. This is a group of students who are trained to see warning signs of suicide and depression in the students around them, and to quietly try to help them. The Hope Squad was also given ideas of how to help in situations like that. Another important thing is the Hope Squad had a team of adults they could turn to for help. They didn't feel all alone in helping someone.

Hope Squad is an example of positive peer pressure. I think peer pressure can be used exactly the opposite way of what I experienced in elementary school. What if people felt they were becoming more and more popular the nicer they were to others? It would be a competition to be nice instead of a competition to bully someone.

I believe that the way to stop bullying is through positive peer pressure and Including everyone, making sure everyone is okay with each other. There might even be something wrong with the bully themselves. Bullying is not just a problem of the victims, but also of the bully themselves.

In conclusion, I have stated how youth violence first affected my life in a negative way that later turned positive, that the cause of violence is negative peer pressure, and that positive peer pressure can help counteract it.

Bentley Corona – 8th Grade
Valley Junior High – Teacher, DeMarie Hoover

Youth Violence Essay

Did you know? Worldwide, the third leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 29 is related to youth violence. This means that the third leading cause of death for a significant portion of the young population is related to youth violence, and proves the threat of youth violence. You may be asking, "what is youth violence, anyway?" Youth violence is violence between or inflicted towards people of youth. This includes forms of physical and sexual abuse, bullying, and, in some cases, even murder. Youth violence is an even stronger problem in the developing world, where funding for things such as education, healthcare, and such is low. Even in wealthy nations, like here in the United States, low-income regions experience a very similar experience for much of the same reasons.

I have a close friend who has experienced youth violence themselves. It is not uncommon for multiple physical fights to occur in one week at my school. My school is not special, however, as youth violence occurs commonly across thousands of schools throughout the United States. This particular fight, which happens to be one of many at my school, was started over something as simple as a misunderstanding on the internet, when my friend had texted a close friend of her's. This close friend of her's was the boyfriend of the girl my friend had fought with. Her boyfriend had once mentioned my friend online, and his girlfriend quickly became suspicious. A few days later, a fight had occurred between my friend and the girl. This simple fight is one of many, and has many consequences. After the fight, my friend had been suspended and our friendship became weaker, as she barely showed up to school out of fear and resentment towards the girl she had fought. My friend's mood changed around the girl and her friend, who she strongly resented, and I was fearful to be around when she was near them. Her refusal to show up at school has greatly limited her academic capability. I have been told several arguments have been caused by this both online and in real life, with a chance of further violence high. This is not uncommon after youth violence occurs, and several other simmilar stories or effects have likely happened. The World Health Organization (WHO) has even stated in its article about youth violence, that the emotional impact of youth violence *"can affect victims' families, friends, and communities,"* which can be proved by this story.

Like all issues, youth violence has many underlying causes. These causes can explain why youth violence is a bigger problem in areas of low income or wealth, and give us insight on what to do about youth violence. The World Health Organization (also known as the WHO) agrees with this, labelling these causes as *"risk factors,"* as these conditions increase the **risk** of youth violence. These risk factors include: living in a low-income family, having uneducated/unemployed parents, and living in a low-income enviornment. Other factors like parental neglect apply to this list, with low parental or family involvement increasing feelings of neglect and often lead to emotional issues and violence. On the other hand, having stricter parents is also a risk factor, desire for freedom creating the same impacts. Having a learning disability is also considered a risk factor, with lack of understanding of how to deal with disagreement sometimes leading to violence. However, when a child is not the one inflicting violence, and someone else is bringing violence towards them, like a family member, risk

factors that lead to this are also simmilar. According to the Mayo Clinic, risk factors for this type of violence, or abuse, lay in physical or mental illness, stress, isolation, and substance abuse. Living in a low-income neighborhood also increases the risk of this type of violence, low-income neighborhoods typically having high violent crime rates and great availability of harmful drugs. People of youth are often exposed to both of these, and increases the risk of them being affected by or partaking in this activity.

All of this raises the question on how to solve the problem that is youth violence. By addressing youth violence's underlying causes, youth violence rates can decline. Neglect of low-income communities, where rates of youth violence are high, needs to end. Education of both adults and children on the matter of youth violence is necessary, and both groups should be taught not to use violent means. Dealing with struggles like substance abuse, family struggles, and others can aid in preventing youth violence, as these are some of the core causes of it to begin with. Another cause of youth violence is the availability of weapons, especially in the United States, where teenagers can easily obtain a gun with lax firearm restrictions and gun availability, even if this is illegal. These weapons can be used in a variety of ways, oftenly causing death. A notably example of this type of violence is a school shooting, an event that is, unfortunately, relatively common in the United States. The majority of these school shootings are not caused by an intruder, but rather, by one of a school's own students. The causes of these shootings lay in mental and emotional issues, which should be dealt with. Improvements in counselling and mental therapy programs can help with this. According to youth.gov, in the article *"Violence Provention"* it is stated 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,"* proving the point that, to solve youth violence, we must deal with what causes it.

Youth violence is a critical issue in our society, with several different causes and consequences, and we as a society should work to deal with the issue of youth violence. Youth violence has affected several lives, including mine and many others, with youth violence often bringing emotional effects towards a victim and those who value them. Youth violence has several causes, often having factors associated with one's environment, upbringing, academic proficiency, and several other factors. The factors for youth violence must be agknowledged and fixed to reduce youth violence, especially considering their dangerus consequences, commonly affecting the way one thinks or behaves for the rest of their life, and sometimes meaning death. Youth violence is a threat to our society and must be stopped, and if we want to make that achievable, we need to resolve several of its underlying issues. Can we really let this pattern of rape, school shootings, and mental trauma continue?

Jasmine De Luna – 8th Grade
Valley Junior High – Teacher, DeMarie Hoover

Youth Violence Essay

200,000 homicides occur worldwide every year among youth from ages 10-24 which is 43% of the homicides globally each year. Youth violence is a serious public health problem that can have a permanent or long-term impact on people ages 10-24. Youth violence includes a range of acts like bullying, threats, fighting, assault, etc. Youth violence experience increases the risk of victimization, substance use, depression, suicide, obicity, and so much more. In this essay I will explain how youth violence has affected my life, what are the causes of youth violence, and how our society can help prevent youth violence involvement. Youth violence can easily have an effect on someone for the rest of their life. Together as a society we can learn how to stop youth violence experiences from happening to anyone else.

Youth violence has affected my life in some ways. Facing peer pressure was the biggest and as a teenager it can be maddening, confusing, stressful, and tiring. I wanted to fit in so I changed things about myself, what I thought, what I believed in, what I wore, even how I acted towards others and myself. I did this because I didn't want to be known as that one "weird girl" in the class. I wanted to be cool as '*one of them*' so I went from being influenced to the influencer. Being around this group of other people made me feel a sort of power like I was in control because I wasn't physically alone. This group of people were the friends I thought I wanted at first but the problem was we weren't really friends we just didn't want to be alone. These "friends" of mine were so comfortable talking bad about others so I joined in because I didn't want to be a disappointment or weak to them but deep down I knew it was wrong. Over time I just got tired of saying/doing these things and pretending to be somebody I'm not. I got mad at myself for being that person and not staying true to myself. I then came to realize that and just became the person I am and try not to let that happen again. According to the syndicate post " peer pressure is one of the toughest challenges teenagers face during their school years. The causes of peer pressure are one thing, but the effects of peer pressure are unquestionably another". Finally, youth violence is something we have all experienced at one point in our life which is something that's sad to think about because we're young and shouldn't be experiencing things such as this.

When youth violence has entered someone's life it can be hard and lead to many causes and effects. When a teenager deals with things youth violence causes such as peer pressure, drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, media influence, and so forth it can change moods, thoughts, and emotions. Peer pressure is a common one; it's when someone's values or beliefs are changed or influenced by their peers to "be accepted" and not be considered an outcast. Causes of peer pressure are wanting social acceptance, afraid of rejection, personal or social confusion, a need to fit in, anxiety, and many more. Effects of peer pressure could be fashion choices, romantic relationships, academic performance, decisions on social groups, along with others. Drug or alcohol abuse is also another cause of youth violence. Effects on drug or alcohol abuse can damage your internal organs and have life threatening infections. Relationships: isolating yourself from family and friends and also have poor decision making. Constantly struggling to pay for drugs which can lead to financial ruin. Sanity: can have major behavioral problems, paranoia, function change in your brain, aggression, and impulsivity. According to the world health organization they state "Violence by young people is one of the most visible forms

of violence. Both fatal and non-fatal assaults involving young people contribute greatly to the global burden of premature death, injury and disability. Youth violence deeply harms not only its victims, but also their families, friends and communities". Those aren't the only effect's the list could go on and on but that's just the cause of youth violence.

Youth violence is an everyday reality but it can be prevented by anyone, friends, family, schools, communities, etc. We just need to learn how to work together. Violence It's hard to stop from hurtings someone's life but it's not impossible there are programs, therapists, even just having someone you can talk to could help. Programs can help a lot. You can talk and listen to people who have gone through something you did and know you're not alone. With therapists you can share what you want and/or get advice in a safe space. If you don't feel comfortable with those you could just talk to a friend or family member. In the report of the CDC they state "In order to prevent youth violence, we must understand and address risk and protective factors at the individual, relational, community, and societal levels". When you talk to someone with youth violence it is not going to be easy it will take time just be patient and there for them. Youth violence can be dealt with by anyone in any shape or form; you just have to be willing to be there every step of the way.

Together as a society we can learn how to stop youth violence experiences from happening to anyone else. When I experienced youth violence had all these weird emotions and thoughts but I knew I wasn't the only one. When we influence or get influenced we are not alone. We've seen or dealt with the causes or effects but we can use that as a learning experience to help others through the same thing. In the end youth violence is like a lie we have all been liars or lied to by the lairs the only difference is how we choose to deal with that lie.

Beck Erickson – 7th Grade
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Reilly Ryan

Youth violence

I think that youth violence has polluted our schools and communities. We as a community need to strive to be better in this sense. We are all living in a poisoned era with youth violence as it's cause. I will explain how youth violence has affected my life personally, What the causes of youth violence are, and how my community and I do to reduce youth violence.

Youth violence has affected me in many ways. People at my school like to see people fight. They think it is amusing, but the kids in the fight would always like to be a bystander. I am lucky to not have been involved in youth violence. Most instances we could avoid it but there are times that youth violence is unavoidable. My parents try their best to keep me away from youth violence. I think they know at some point they will not be able to protect me anymore. They know that I will have to face it on my own and if I make the wrong choice I could be sucked into the vortex that is youth violence.

Causes of youth violence vary a lot. There are causes that happen with a kid's parents being the source of the violence. A child will have a higher chance of being involved in youth violence if their parents abused them at home. Another cause of youth violence is trying to be something you're not. If you want to be cool at school you might act differently than you do at home. Someone might say you need to pick on a kid at school to get into their friend group and that has a high chance of working. Your friends might want you to smoke or drink and that whole train wreck starts with addiction. Another cause of youth violence is teasing and bullying. Kids can get pretty mad just by telling them stuff that hurts them personally. When people get teased they have a habit of putting their anger into the other physically. Surprisingly this is the biggest factor and most common in getting into a fight as well as misunderstanding.

We as a community need to help each other and build each other up instead of breaking each other down. Counseling is a big help to kids that think that violence is the only way to solve their problems. The only problem is kids don't want to admit they need help. In a book titled The boy, the mole, the fox, and the horse a page says "what is the bravest thing you've said" said the boy "Help" said the horse. Another problem with counseling is more about teasing and bullying. People think you have problems if you go to a counselor. We as a community need to get better at helping others.

I believe that if us as the community can commit and change our ways to stop youth violence. I do truly believe that youth violence is a problem in our lives and schools. If we don't change our ways we will be in a dark generation to come.

Maddox Eyre – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace

Why Youth Violence?

Throughout many people's lives stories are often told about the the terror and fear caused by two sole reasons. Bullying and youth violence. There, that's it. Not much to go off of huh? Well before writing this essay I didn't know much about the two other than those stories I had mentioned earlier. How has youth violence affected my life? For me personally, not in the slightest, but that's only me. That's only one person in the billions that fill up this planet. Is youth violence uncommon, or am I very, very lucky?

Well I've done some research and apparently I'm lucky. Fun fact: 200,000 homicides between the varying ages of 10-29 occur every year due to youth violence. Even funner fact: This makes it in the top four of leading death cases in youths per year. Now that we know the numbers I think it's about time we take a look at the whys and hows of youth violence.

Guess what! The main reasons for youth violence amongst kids, teens and adults are the media, communities and neighborhoods, domestic violence, insufficient parental supervision, peer pressure and underage drug or alcohol usage! Oh wait, those aren't good. You'd think that with all these reasons and all these people dying annually, something would be done to fix this. Well you're partially right. There are many organizations like the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, and the Columbia University Center for Youth Violence. The thing with these organizations is that sadly studies show that only 2.4% of these programs were effective long term. This really sucks.

With all of those organizations and programs failing, this begs the question, "What can be done to prevent youth violence?"

I am at a complete loss. No real way to sugar coat it. I mean think about it, all of these organizations from places like Harvard and Columbia University and they aren't able to fix it. Wait a minute, I think I got something! Hear me out, what if there were required classes in school that circled the ideas of preventing bullying and youth violence. The class would go in depth on the causes and effects of all the homicides I talked about earlier. This class could be taken between late elementary school years and early middle school years. This is because studies say that the best time for comprehending knowledge is between the ages 4-12. This would hopefully prevent problems before they even happened.

Before writing this and researching these topics I had absolutely no idea the gravity of youth violence and how much it was a disease towards society. It's disgusting that this has been left killing people without more recognition than stories parents tell their kids about bullies. This may be a tad bit crude but all in all youth violence sucks. Thank you for considering my report. I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing this.

Samuel Gertge – 8th Grade
North Layton Junior High – Teacher, Savannah Lund

When I was 9 years old, I saw a 6th grader push a 2nd grader into the wall and he made the 2nd grader give him his school money and I was scared because I didn't want to have to give the kid all my school money, so I ran away back into my classroom, and I told the teacher about what I had just saw. The teacher ran out into the hall, and she yelled at him super loudly and he dropped the money and ran away. The kid ended up getting suspended and the kid that got bullied was rewarded with 50 school dollars. This experience really opened my eyes to the reality of how harsh and mean people can be, and sometimes it isn't even their fault, it could be someone who influences them.

I think that peoples home life effects whether they bully or not. If a kid has parents that aren't in a stable relationship or divorced, that might put stress and sadness over the kid, which turns them violent, and they want other kids to feel the same pain that they do. If one or more of a kid's parents

drinks alcohol or does drugs, the parents might act in an abusive manner. When kids are abused by their parents it might make the kids think it's either normal or excepted to bully/abuse other kids. Also, when parents neglect their kids, they seek attention, even if it isn't a pleasant interaction, they want someone to be thinking about them, even if it is in a bad way. They just want to be loved, they want to be thought about, and they don't want to be forgotten.

I think that we need to put laws against some of the things I listed before. I think that drinking and drugs should be illegal, not only can it hurt you, but it hurts others around you, sometimes it hurts others even more. It puts sadness into kids' hearts which makes them want to do things which aren't good, to try and numb their pain of seeing their parents under the influence, it truly hurts to see someone intoxicated. I personally know someone whose parents drink and do drugs and he doesn't do good at school, and he gets in fights a lot. He has no respect for the school's faculty. Because his

parents care more about the drugs and alcohol than their own son. It truly can ruin lives. Now, I don't know if that student will succeed in life due to their parents influence over them. I think that making drugs and alcohol illegal will greatly reduce violence amongst kids.

Also, kids need to tell someone they trust if their parents abuse them. I feel like there is way more abuse happening than what is reported, I feel like kids are scared to report abuse incase their parents find out what they did. I think that there should be stricter laws against abuse because when kids are abused, they might think that it is okay to do those things even though they are terrible things to do. When kids are under the influence of bad people, it can make them bad people too. I don't think that people understand how important it is to have good parents. People need to do better with their kids, it can save lives.

Nik Harper – 8th Grade
The Terra Academy – Teacher, Crystal Allen

Numb

Drugs, pressure, and looking cool; it's all so dumb

You'll be enclosed and distanced; you'll be so numb.

6th grade, my brother told my parents he got offered weed

He told them it was neither a want, nor a need.

By the time of what should have been his graduation

He was halfway across the country, for rehabilitation.

He did more than the light stuff, when he did it, he did it all.

From it he schizophrenia, mental sickness; he had the worst of any fall

Then throughout all his years, of being a young adult

He was on the streets, scarred and scared, it was barely even his fault.

Some time later, he was twenty-one, I, nearly twelve

He made his way back home, but he seemed to loathe himself.

One year later, November, friday the thirteenth had just began

He relapsed; he overdosed; I would never be with him again.

My family, we were selfish, we thought we were deserted.

We said " it's too soon! We don't deserve this!"

However, we were quick, to see the bright side

He's no longer suffering, no more voices in his mind

Although I'd agree, he went at a fast pace

At the very least, he's in a better place.

Now we have learned, we should help others

Whether or not, they're our sisters or our brothers.

When you know that, you've saved someone's life,

You do it again, they'll survive, you will thrive.

So, now you know, when someone cries out for help,

Even if it's not obvious, don't just focus on yourself.

Jackson Hughes – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen

200,000 youth from ages 10-29 die due to homicide every year. This makes up for nearly 42% of homicides every year and is the third leading cause of death for this age bracket (World Health Organization). Youth violence is quickly becoming a problem throughout the world. The U.S. has the third most youth homicides worldwide. There have been 814 school shootings since 2013 in the U.S.A. and has caused 264 deaths. (everytownresearch.org). Through personal experience and scientific research I know that youth violence needs to be prevented immediately. "This is no time to let down our guard on youth violence. Research demonstrates that appropriate interventions made during or prior to adolescence can direct young people away from violence toward healthy and constructive lives." – David Satcher (quotesguide.com).

Youth violence doesn't alway have to be big. People are often discreet in how they harm others. They'll maybe push someone out of their way or hurt someone in the locker room. Even though these are smaller, they are still extremely detrimental to the victims and the school community. I personally have not had a lot of experience with extreme cases of youth violence, but I have witnessed these smaller examples. This has caused me to avoid certain people and tread carefully when I'm around them. Whenever I see people getting riled up, I try to move and avoid that area. I immediately get scared and I try to escape anyway possible. It makes me feel unsafe and worried. Violence also hurts the community. With a lot of fights, people begin to not be as trusting and not be as friendly. They become cold and bitter. My first experience with youth violence was when I was in third or fourth grade. I heard about two teenagers getting in a fight and ending up shooting each other which ended one of their lives. When I heard this I was despondent and frightened that teenagers near my house would end each other's lives. It caused me to be frightened and nervous when I went to school despite knowing that nothing would happen. The thought of death lingered in my brain haunting me.

Youth violence can be caused by many factors (verywellfamily.org). I believe that the main factors are poverty, drugs, and abuse. According to huduser.gov, "Numerous studies, for instance, show that neighborhoods with higher poverty rates tend to have higher rates of violent crime." Poverty can make it hard to live. Lots of things are out of your control when you're poor and you need support. Youth often don't like this uncertainty that poverty brings. They try to get some control in their lives by hurting others. This makes them feel like they can control what happens and gives them some power. Drugs are probably the biggest factor in my area. Prolonged use of drugs can cause depression, anger, and frustration which can cause youth to lash out at others. They don't have anyone to discuss these things with and this causes them to bottle up their emotions. Abuse changes the way youth are. They become scared and they want to be in control. Youth who are abused try to put themselves in a position of power and hurt other teens. At school, these youths don't want to be hurt so they make it clear that they will harm you. All of these relate to a lack of support. These kids don't have someone to protect them or take care of them, so they in turn protect themselves in any way possible.

In order to prevent youth violence, the best thing is to create a loving community that supports each other. Having teachers that listen and counselors that work individually with youth can help prevent youth violence. The worst thing is when an adult yells at youth. It doesn't stop the fights, it just makes them resentful and bitter. If you're like me, you don't really know how to prevent things like this and feel like you don't have enough power. I think that the best thing is to simply be kind to other

people. Treat everyone with respect. You don't know how they feel and what they're going through. Don't go picking fights with someone just because they bumped into you. Don't isolate people because they're addicted to drugs or get into fights frequently. This is just going to make them feel even more alone and more bitter and angry and the world. I'm not saying put yourself in uncomfortable positions, but I do believe that respecting people goes a far way. This may seem simple, but it's the easiest and best way to help prevent youth violence. This is something everyone can do without needing to be rich, powerful, or famous. Being understanding and supportive is the best way to prevent youth violence.

Youth violence plagues the world. In 2014, 501,581 youths were treated in a hospital or an emergency room due to physical assaults. Personally, even small acts of violence cause me to get anxious and frightened. The acts of violence can be caused by all sorts of things like poverty, drugs, and abuse. The best way for me and for anyone to try and prevent it from happening is just being kind to others. Helping people and not looking for fights is a great way to stop fighting. I believe that we can conquer youth violence by being supportive and inviting to our peers.

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Hazel Jonas – 7th Grade
Canyons Online Middle School – Teacher, Mariah Higgins

Do the Write Thing Essay Contest 2022

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kayla Kunz – 7th Grade
Butler Middle School – Teacher, Anna McNamer

When you think of everyday life you don't usually think of youth violence as a very common thing...unless you have experienced it your-self, whether at school or at home. Several people when going through youth violence feel alone, while in reality you're never truly alone.At time talking to an adult or even with a counselor seems out of the question, this can lead to more violence thoughts such as self-harm or even suicide. Some people can find writing about their experiences to be more helpful than talking about it to someone, some people may think they'll be judged when they talk to an adult. With writing you can be anonymous and some people even feel like it's therapeutic. A number of kids in middle school my take things into consideration such as drugs, smoking, alcohol, or even attempting suicide. This can be from bullying, at home life, abuse or even the death of someone. When you're in middle school you're at the right age where you are vulnerable you're not too young to not know about these things, but you're not too old to develop habits in saying no. I can support this in Measuring Violence Against Children "32% of kids ages 13-15 have been physically attacked and 8.6 in 10 children worldwide between ages 2 and 14 are exposed to youth violence" . But how can you help with youth violence? The things you do don't have to be major, it might just be you being kind to someone, or helping someone out. All across worldwide youth violence happens on a daily basis, so let's put an end to it.

Gwen Lloyd – 8th Grade
North Layton Junior High – Teacher, Savannah Lund

Youth Violence

Fists, crying, blood, principles office, yelling.

Too many to count,

Fights.

Too scared to say anything,

watching and waiting in suspense not talking.

Violence.

It's become normal, walking down the hallway and seeing a dented locker from a thrown head.

People don't take other's feelings into account.

Who cares if someone doesn't like what you like!

It's not the end of the world. You don't always have to be right.

It's ok to be wrong.

All of this has made me quiet, too afraid to speak my mind or talk back. Walk away. Take flight.

Youth violence changes people. A young boy, who was kind and had good friends, until others came along.

Resorted to violence. Punching. This boy became angry, struggled in school and with friends.

What can I do? Feel as though there is nothing to do.

Feeling helpless, I hide, keep quiet.

Jealously can control us like puppets on a string.

Something I've felt and hope to never feel again.

Violence and other feelings can cause people to change,

Change the way you look,

Change the way you act,

Act like everyone else, fit in, then they'll like you.

We may feel these feelings, but through it all, we can be kind.

Together.

But I must be me, because there is no one like me,

And there is no one like you.

And only I can start the change, is the way I must think

To help end youth violence.

Talk to someone, and agree to disagree.

Sit with someone who is alone, and I can spread the kindness, a guarantee.

I might start it, but I can't keep it alive forever, we all need to do our part.

Using little acts of kindness, we can spread joy.

Smile, Laughing, hugs, friends, talking.

Youth Kindness

Gabriella Long – 8th Grade
The Terra Academy – Teacher, Crystal Allen

Do the Write Thing

What is youth violence? Youth violence is the intention to either physically or mentally harm someone. Youth violence has affected my life and it was scary. There are lots of causes for youth violence, including drugs, poor parenting, or the bad influence of others. So, what exactly can we do about youth violence? How can we prevent or stop it?

How has youth violence affected my life? When I was about four or five, I had a teenager show up to my house with a knife. He was on drugs and he thought people were chasing him, when it turns out nobody was chasing him. It was really scary for me because I answered the door and he was standing there holding a knife. He most likely got his hands on drugs from his parents or friends, so it's important to influence your kids or friends to not do drugs.

How can we prevent youth violence? We can prevent youth violence by making sure that our friends or peers aren't struggling with anything at home and talking to them. We can make sure they are okay and not doing anything bad to themselves, like taking drugs. Most people do drugs to free themselves from whatever is hurting them in their life, so talking to them and making sure your friend or peer is okay makes a huge difference for them. This is one way to prevent youth violence.

Emmet Lurth – 7th Grade
Minersville School – Teacher, Mandy Jones

Youth violence is going on every day and kids are affected by it all the time. It is a major conflict in the world and it should stop. When youth violence is happening teenagers and kids change their point of view in life. When they do that it can lead to bad things and effects. I will be talking about Youth violence and how it has affected my life, some causes of youth violence, and what I can do about youth violence.

Youth violence has not affected my life because I have not been in any youth violence. I have not been in any fights or anything like that. I try to stay away from it and try not to start a fight. I have read something about a girl getting in a fight because of some shoes and she then had to go to a program to help stop the youth violence. The program had to help her to not be vengeful and not to go back to the girl who fought her and get revenge. She was trying to stand up for herself because a girl got jealous of her shoes. So they said that they were going to meet up at a park and challenge her over the shoes. The girl agreed to it because she felt pressured to stand up for herself. She should have just realized to report it and not start a fight.

Some causes of youth violence are social media, peer pressure, traumatic events, drug and alcohol use, and child abuse. I have read about an article that a person punched someone over a girl and social media and he killed a high schooler. Some effects of youth violence are fights, getting hurt, bullying, and even death. The causes of youth violence can lead to many different things and they can get so bad that teenagers sometimes have to go to jail, if they are older. They can also go to schools and talk about youth violence and share their experience with others.

Youth violence can be slowed down or stopped if we help youth that need to get away from it. Something that I can do about youth violence is stay away from it and report it if I see it going on. Youth violence is something that everyone should stay away from and tell a trusted adult. Youth violence can be stopped many ways even if it's just knowing a safe route home or just noticing any unusual activity. There are multiple things that parents can help out with to stop youth violence because parents will always stick up for their kid if they are in need. By helping out with these things you can make your community a better and safer place.

Youth violence is a big conflict in the world and we can try to help decrease the amount of it going on. Youth violence is not a good thing but it still happens in our everyday life. We are able to help people that have this conflict and that need to get over it. There are a lot of people that need to seek therapy because of youth violence. The effects of youth violence are absurd and cause a lot of problems. We need to stand strong and help slow youth violence down.

Jersee Marshall – 8th Grade
Minersville School – Teacher, Mandy Jones

Do the Write Thing

Whether you have been the victim or the perpetrator, almost everybody has been affected by youth violence in their life, sometimes even without realizing it. It has been a problem in every neighborhood, school, or even household for a very long time. Some people would probably like to know, what is youth violence? What causes it? And how can we try and stop it? I'm here to try and answer some of these questions.

First of all, what exactly is youth violence? Youth violence is any type of violence committed by somebody young, whether it be physical, mental, or etc. Now, if I had said I had never experienced youth violence, I would be lying. This is because I used to be the one causing it. I remember a time in second grade when I threw a pencil at a teacher's face, which at the time I thought wasn't a big deal, but I got in a lot of trouble for it. I realize now that I could've seriously hurt the teacher, and I also remember how I used to get in trouble for hitting or saying something to other kids pretty often. I think at the time I didn't really realize that what I was doing was wrong, so I did these things without expecting consequence. Of course I've gotten better, but I still feel bad everytime I think about what I've done.

Now, what exactly causes youth violence? Some evidence suggests that youth violence can be linked to childhood trauma. According to judge Melissa Powers of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court from USA today,"We see it over and over, very similar common denominators with the children's early life . . . Almost 100% of violent offenders have early trauma,". Most kids who have committed youth violence have childhood trauma of some sort. This trauma can be caused by loved ones, "friends," or sometimes even random people at school. Some examples of trauma are seeing or experiencing violence, having a parent in jail, and having a parent who is absent.

How could we try and stop or help people who have experienced youth violence? Going off of my previous answer of childhood trauma, we could put programs in schools to try and give these kids support. Many times the cause of parent's inflicting trauma on their children is because of drug abuse, so we could also give rehab programs to parents struggling with addiction. Sometimes parents don't even realize that they're hurting their kids, and think that it's just the way that you raise children. To help with this, we could make courses or programs of some sort to help parents with raising children. Parents also getting any problems checked out before having children, whether mental or physical, would also help.

Youth violence can be pretty common, but with the help of schools, parents, and other people, we can try and help stop it. Ways we could do this are by giving the kids who have been affected by it support, and by giving parents programs to help with addiction or parenting.

Destini Masters – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Dustin Flores

Somethings we are taught as children
Do not tattle do not snitch not ever,
if a boy hits you it means he likes you,
What is right, and what is wrong
Some foods are good and some are bad,
enjoy the little things
But the one that has chased me
throughout tunnels and mazes
That we call growing up is:
the most humane thing you can do for a firefly
Is to poke holes in the lid of the jar you catch it in
I thought I was so charitable
To shove a toothpick through the tin foil
Atop the mason jar and it's flickering captive
So it's only natural that as I grew
I became content with semi-suffocation
As long as I was offered a few gulps of fresh air every now and again.
And so it's only natural that I thought
The people who fed me oxygen through straws
Like a jar bound firefly were saints for being so kind
As to even let me breath
Perhaps the most humane thing you can do for a firefly
Is to not catch it at all

Society has taught us
That there is no time for flaws
You must be perfect no matter the cause
You can grasp a moment of happiness
Only if you do perfect
And we laugh and snicker
Behind our screens
But when it comes down to it
We are all just insecure teens

And to be perfect I must have light freckles on my face
And live without a care
I must have a small smooth waist
But be careful about what I wear
I must have hair with a natural curl
And eyes that glisten in the sun
Because this is what they call a pretty girl
And I want to be one

But perhaps I will reflect my insides

Make myself a mess on the outside
Show everyone what they've been trying to avoid
I'll turn into yesterday's makeup
Dark circles and chapped lips
The need for acceptance
Is more than mean

They'll say your mind is a machine
Some people are better than others
Some people have been broken by another
Some by, fathers, friends, or mothers

Sometimes my screws get stuck and broken
Lodged into places not meant to be
And i'll be filled to the brim
With the underlying cause of failure

I've lost my durability over the years
Small malfunctions send me into a break down
Online sources have only worsened my fears
Bullying has worn down my gears
And an unstable family as broken my switch
Not only me, but to many young minds
Many things can be the cause
But maybe add self harm into the mix

But it's only self harm if it leaves a scar, right?
Not the little bit of pain and the snap
As I pull hair out of my head
Loving the release I feel with every strand
The little pangs of pain I felt as
I picked at the gums between my teeth
The pink stains on my finger afterwards
And the pools of red under my nails and beneath
The skin around my nail beds appeared bright and reddened
Shredded and torn when I get anxious
But I do not self harm
Because I never took a blade to my skin

And there is so much I wish I could say
Words that will not leave my tongue
So perhaps I'll type them all down
In hopes that it will be enough
Hopes that someone will listen

But either way I assume i'll fail
Because I can cry, bleed, and cough these demons
Onto blank pages for the rest of my life
Pour out every truth i've ever known
And still not save a life

I envy you reader,
as you flow through these pages,
faster than I could ever pick up the pieces
Of me and the people around me
Holding my mother when she cries
When it should have been the other was around
I'm afraid I was doomed from the start
And there's not much you can do
To fix my broken heart

I wish I could start over
Perhaps write my book again
A fresh chapter without the issues
Without all the toxic friends
With no ink splatters across the page
Or blank spaces where people suddenly left my side
No smudges from my tears that get worse with age
Or scribbled out sentences because
I barely even tried
But even so my sadness isnt poetic
It's not even beautiful

And alcohol always seemed
To be underlying cause
As it tore my family apart
As I grasp the missing figure of a parent
Hold on to the thoughts and feeling of what used to be
Sure he was there
But never when I needed him to be
The court dates they tried to hide
And how I was asked if I could feel safe
In the home with someone
Who tried to take his own life

I grew up thinking it was my fault
I was a child with a heavy weight on my shoulders
Carrying guilt that wasn't even mine to carry
And maybe if someone had helped carried the guilt

Had spoken up and asked if I was ok
Had been a friend
and treated me just the same
Lifting up the spirits is
Something that we can do for others
Get them the help they need
Stop the cruel cycle of the abused
Becomes the abuser

Youth Violence is a weed,
We let it grow and infect our society
it grows in the sprouting gardens
Of our young minds
It entagles it's poison filled roots in the cracks
and holes of our community
and tells us everything we aren't,
Tells us this is what we deserve
it destroys us from the inside out.
We need to pluck it from our society
before it has the chance to entangle its roots in the
young minds of many victimized people.

Jack McAllister – 8th Grade
Canyons Online Middle School – Teacher, Mariah Higgins

Do the Write Thing Essay Contest 2022

Youth violence is a conflict among people which often results in physical injury, emotional injury, or death. Violence can happen anywhere from our own homes to schools, to streets and parks. It can happen at any moment of any day and can be planned or unplanned. Recently I was involved with a bit of emotional violence on social media. Somebody anonymously posted on my SnapChat "How did Jack make ODP, he isn't even good." He was referring to me making the State ODP team. My response was quick and easy. I said, "hold on a minute, the National ODP soccer team is calling." I had to make the State Team to make the West Region team, to make the National Showcase, to make the National ODP squad. I knew it was somebody projecting their insecurities on someone who had found success. The three major causes of youth violence in my community are stressful situations, verbal abuse, and low self esteem.

The first main cause of youth violence in communities is stressful situations. According to the article, *When Words Hurt*, written by Faith Hickman it says, "when we are in a stressful situation, we barely think at all." This means that It is so easy for our emotions to take over and lose control of our body, actions, and thoughts. This shows why stressful situations can cause violence.

Another main cause of youth violence in communities comes from verbal abuse. According to Faith Hickman in her article When words hurt, she said "Wounding words can come from people you hardly know and from those you love the most." This means that verbal abuse could stem from almost everybody we come in contact with each day. Our words to others matter. This shows that verbal abuse can contribute to violence.

The last main cause of youth violence in the community stems from low self esteem. In Faith Hickman's article When words hurt, she said "... many bullies abuse others in order to feel better about themselves." This came from interviews and a study by a student named Ian Rivers at Brunel University in the UK. Some adolescents do not get any attention in their homes so they lose their sense of who they are and take it out on others to make themselves feel more important, valued or loved. This shows how low self esteem can lead to violence.

Fortunately there are some things we can do to limit violence, even though it is not always avoidable. However, one solution for the problems of violence is to turn it into something positive. You can do this by figuring out the problem and then finding steps to resolve it. Having conversations with trusted relatives can help before the problem escalates, or for additional help. Another idea is that you can not let the things people say about you change who you are. Additionally, we can stand up for others as we see things unfold.

The major causes of violence in communities are stressful situations, verbal abuse, and low self esteem. Stressful situations cause people to act in ways that may not be normal for them. Verbal abuse is all around us and can be a major cause of violence in our communities. People with low self esteem seem to be contributors to violence because they want to feel better themselves. It's time for us to take a stand by helping those who seem neglected, who need a friend, who need calmness in their lives. This will help our community to thrive with less violence.

Macy McCarter – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen

Do it right

Fix this, fix that

Make it tight

Punch a wall

Make yourself bleed

Feel the pain

Force your eyes to see

If you don't you will die

Or simply just lie.

Lie in a bed of fears

Lie in a bed of tears

I can cry,

It's okay.

Or maybe i'm just saying that

So I won't feel this way.

Don't eat, you're too fat,

They won't accept you like that.

Just starve yourself

Your mind says food is poisoned anyway.

It started with a thought

One that I didn't want.

But now I am violent

Even though I'm just staying silent.

Depression anxiety

Suicidality.

Trauma.

The usual causes of violence in teens.

That wasn't me. I'm not them.

I never wanted this reality.

I'm kind and loving.

Violence was never my thing.

But there I was,

Hurting me.

I don't want to be this way

I never asked to be

What are these thoughts?

Why so violent?

WHY IS THIS ME

I should ask.

Get a therapist

Find what it is

It's OCD.

Why?

Why OCD?

What even is OCD?

What are intrusive thoughts?

They scare me.

They scar me.

I want it to stop

Exposure therapy.

Face your fears.

Ride the waves

Emotions and tears.

Through the pain and working hard.

I learn to let down my guard.

Freedom from a trap I couldn't see.

Free to think and just be me.

Time to help others

I'm not alone.

In pain. Fighting. Violent. Darkness. Misery.

Hurting deeply on their own.

Use my voice, speak up, speak out.

There's a way to peace.

I'm free of doubt.

Just. Reach. Out.

Elisabeth Pehrson – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace

How Youth Violence Affects Our World

This is a true story. Names have been redacted to protect the innocent. About 3 years ago I was in a school called Starlight Academy. My older sister had just left the school due to bullying done to her but I had decided to stay because I had been very shy. A few days after she left, her so-called "friend " Gavin cursed at me everytime he saw me. For the first few weeks he didn't do anything worse than that. After he saw that I wouldn't tell on them, he began to gang up on me after school before my carpool came. Gavin would shout insults at me and a few times he would try and make me miss my carpool because he knew that I would be stuck at the school for hours until one of my parents could come and get me. I was too terrified to do anything and my friends who witnessed this told me that they didn't mean anything and that I shouldn't report them. I believed them because, by that point no matter how much it was hurting me it had become my new normal. My grades began to plummet because I hated to come to school. I would not get up in the morning to try and make myself late so I never had to run into these kids. I even cried myself to sleep each night. One night my mom found me. She pushed me until I told her about everything that had been happening. The next day she called my principal and told her what had been done to me. I was terrified that this would only make things worse but in my case I was lucky. Gavin was suspended for a day and when he came back he pretended like I didn't exist. I left that same year and moved to my new school with my brother. I now have a ton of real friends who care about and respect me.

This story is based off of something that happened to one of my closest friends. In this case my friend had been very lucky because someone found out before anything spiraled but I know that many are not as lucky as she is. She trusted me with this story but asked me to never tell anybody about what happened but I have seen my friends joke about bullying and it makes me feel awful. My school has a very small bullying problem and because of this so many of my friends don't know what this feels like. I had an experience a few weeks ago that showed this difference. Some of my friends had been joking around and one of them started yelling that they were being bullied. They were all joking around but this caused, for lack of a better word, a flashback to when I found out my friend had been calling and I wasn't there for her. I broke down into tears and for the first time told someone at school about what had happened. Since then my friends have stopped joking about that and they have started to finally realize that this is a real problem.

I think right now at my age one of the first steps to preventing any kind of youth violence will be bringing awareness to it. Right now with new variants of covid on the rampage that is what is considered important news. Unfortunately, because youth violence is common, when it happens or is discovered many people consider it less important news because again it happens all the time. The part that people don't consider is that it could ruin people's lives. According to cdc.gov ``Every day, more than 1,000 youths are treated in emergency departments for physical assault related injuries." and according to un.org "Worldwide some 200,000 homicides occur among youth 10-29 years of age each year which is 43% of the total number of homicides globally each year." It probably doesn't have to be said but, that is way too many. Kids everywhere deserve to grow up in a world where they don't have to worry about someone jumping at them at every corner. They should know they have someone in their corner. I have a

neighbor who almost had to go into witness protection because of gang violence at the age of 17. Thankfully when everything had settled down he was able to come back. I can still see that he struggles with the trauma of his experiences even though he has managed to build a regular life for himself again.

Many things cause youth violence but I think one of the biggest causes of youth violence is social media. Thousands of people each year are subjected to the toxic environment that social media presents. It creates yet another opportunity for people to bully or be plain out creepy and not feel guilty about it. These platforms can sometimes let people not feel guilty because they can forget that there are real people with real emotions on the other end. This is not true however and according to Data Prot "80% of teens say that others cyberbully because they think it's funny." Bullying and Cyberbullying are just one type of youth violence and something has to be done. If the world continues ignoring the problems of its future generations then kids will grow up thinking that they can bully others to get what they want. It's not just the world though everyone can do something about it if they are willing to stand up for themselves or to stand up for those who need someone to stand up for them because they are too broken.

Deija Peni – 7th Grade
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan

The Pressure

How has youth violence affected your life?

Youth violence has affected my life by being sexually molested by one of my family members. When I was about 5-6 years old, I was told to go into a closet and wait for them when they came back, we did stuff that I didn't know what we were doing. As I got older It came to me to know what they were doing to me. I didn't want to tell anyone because I thought they wouldn't believe me or look at me in a different way **I was pressured**. That's why I didn't want to say anything because I was scared my sister even pointed out I was really quiet before and I look more happier then before.

Why did I have to be forced to do those things it mostly happened on the weekends so I would always beg my parents to go sleepover my cousins house cause their house was my get away from them. Then Some nights I would cry myself to sleep asking myself **why me?** Not that I was say why not someone else just saying that I was also stressed a lot. Myself started to develop depression and anxiety most of my life I felt like I had no choice in life. To be honest I did have suicidal thoughts, but I thought to myself I have a family that wants me to be here, but I couldn't take it anymore. I would mostly cry when I'm mad or stressed which would mostly happen with my step dad but we still loved each other.

Pass a few years I'm 11 years old I've built up myself to tell my parents what has been happening we cried I told them everything my parents confronted them. They cried and even said sorry and hugged me. Only a few weeks went by they started doing it again… It came to my mind that they didn't mean that sorry they lied to my face. We moved during the end of 2020 they were still doing It I didn't say anything, but my second older sister did she found videos on that person's phone and told my parents again. My parents were heartbroken my mom even said to my stepdad that if he doesn't leave this house then we'll leave. Honestly that was my first time seeing my dad crying on the stairs I see my step dad as my real father. Since my biological dad left I didn't have a dad but only or a little bit.

That person was my step brother he moved away but even when there my family I still see them sometimes at reunions. In my mind I said to myself ''dang I really let him do that for 6 years of my life. To only think I'm just 12 turning 13. A few months went by I felt numb I didn't feel any excitement until I met a whole bunch of people my age they came into my life and uplifted me so did my cousins mostly I felt closer to my cousins, so I decided to tell them before everyone started to find out. Now I feel strong, independent, active, funny, and much more happier now that person is gone and that is how Youth violence has affected my life.

What are the causes of youth violence?

The causes of youth violence could be like bullying, fighting, self-harm, being abused and many more. In my opinion having to go through youth violence or even doing it. It can or will emotionally scar you and others. Youth violence can lead to other people wanting to hurt

themselves or others in many ways. I didn't realize that the causes of going through or even doing youth violence can send a huge wave of emotions and will smack you down.

For my opinion I want to spread to others in need of help or a hand. An example I want to call out to the people going through youth violence and say that they aren't alone, and you can fight it off just keep holding on. Even if you are on the edge of the cliff there will always be a person to understand the pain you are going through. I think talking it out or anything that helps you the most will might help you with things you're going through in life. I see on social media that many children, teenagers, and adults feel stressed and tired and pressured just like how I was.

What do I do about youth violence?

What to do about youth violence can be hard to deal with like telling someone about your situations with something or someone. The thing you need to do is to go to someone or somewhere or even do something thing to make yourself more comfortable in your situation. To start off you could tell a grown up or even someone you feel most comfortable with and tell them that you need comfort and whatever it Is that you need. You should need to tell someone at one point cause if you don't it might continue. I say this because when I didn't it happened again. I end this essay by saying don't be afraid to say anything because I don't want people going through the same thing as me.

Parker Phipps – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Ashley Hauber

Youth violence can impact in unimaginable ways. The smallest things can cause the biggest problems. I want you to remember small things because they evolve. Violence has affected my life in a way that Is recognizable. I remember noticing violence as a kid. Youth violence can be anything negative towards youth. I feel that if someone is putting some sort of negative feeling or influence on a youth it counts as youth violence. So bullying, harassing, abuse, self deprecation, depression, ect these all impact youth in horrible ways. I have seen depression and bullying.

What I have noticed is all around me. Violence affects everyone even if it hasn't happened to you. Seeing kids at school passing by and noticing the way they look can hint how they feel. I had a friend who got bullied when he was younger. I noticed bullying and watched but did nothing. He was known as the crybaby, the wimp. He cried so much and I saw and thought it was bullying. It was worse than I knew. Everyone thought he cried because he was bullied. That is only a part of it. He only had a mother to take care of him and he struggled and had depression. So in school was the place he could let it out without his mom noticing and feeling sad for him. Eventually my friends and I got teachers involved and they stopped harassing him.

 One day I walked into the bathroom and heard him crying, I was confused. I asked him why and calmed him down and that's when we became friends. That day I made a new friend and realized why he was in pain. So any kid, teenager, brother, sister, son, daughter out there who had to go through what he went through would understand violence and pain. Anyone would cry enduring what he went through.

Youth violence has many causes. So I can go on and on but it won't end. I'm going to simplify it down to the roots. The core of what causes youth violence is simple: HATE. That's all it is, just flat out hate. Hate can start so easily. It starts with negative feelings that grow into hate. So these kids out there in the world experience all these horrible feelings that breed and grow hatred. As hate grows and grows it leads to youth violence. Throughout their life hate grows more and can start wars and ruin peace.

 I see hate as a seed, and if you water that seed and give it sunlight it will grow and roots will plant in the ground and make it harder to remove. What are some negative feelings that can cause hate? The most noticeable reasons and the ones I have seen are what I will call BAD. Bullying, Abuse, and Depression are the main causes I feel need to be fixed. These three things will ruin lives.

It usually starts with bullying and bullying can start at such a young age it will grow throughout the person's life. If bullying does not stop it will lead to Abuse. Bullies can start physically harassing and hurting the victim. After severe bullying and physical abuse the victim will give birth to depression. This will ruin someone's life and cause scars that can't heal. So what do they do to try to cure it? Preventing depression from even starting is the best cure. The cycle continues unless it is broken. BAD will repeat itself until we choose to stop it.

So what should we do? What if we don't let it start? Remember, " The smallest things can cause the biggest problems." Hate is part of human nature, how the human brain works. It's hard to change human emotion. Our minds can create a seed eventually of hate. It's only just a seed but that seed will ruin lives. We can't stop the seed from being born but as fast as we can we need to kill that seed so it won't grow. If it grows it will turn into a tree with big roots and it will be almost impossible to remove.

At a young age we need to train youth to talk about feelings. Schools should have therapists and have kids do daily check-ins and talk about negative feelings. This would relieve the students of their negative thoughts and can kill the seed. Kids need someone for them that they feel comfortable to talk to. Sometimes parents aren't the best to go to. A trained therapist could help kids at a young age so they can stop the seed from growing. I think we could start a non profit organization called Stop BAD. This would fund the therapists and pay for their work. It would host fun activities and help kids grow in a positive way. Youth violence can start at such a young age. We need to stop violence fast.

Grayson Rae – 8th Grade
Treasure Mountain Middle School – Teacher, Larissa Fomuke

Youth Violence

A boy walks home from school, through the streets of the city, it is a Friday, and he is lost in thought, dreaming of his weekend plans. The shouts and muffled sounds interrupt his flow of thought. Cautiously, he ducks his head into the street alleyway containing the sounds. Four boys of roughly the same age, are assaulting a boy whom he had just been interacting with at school. Frazzled, the boy quickly calls 911 and runs to find a trusted adult who can intervene. The introduced story presents a common issue; youth violence. Youth violence and the consequences that come from youth violence, occur every day, causing significant injuries, mental problems, and long-term behavioral and social problems to everyday people. To give a more expanded overview, "Youth Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24. Youth violence can include fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness." (cdc.gov) This quote provides an introduction to the numerous participating factors in accounts of youth violence, such as the positions of involvement that include being a "victim, offender, or witness." As can be seen, many factors play into youth violence, first and foremost, the causes. Being able to identify the causes of youth violence will lead to understanding the following consequences, as well as how everyday people can prevent violence seen in youth. This will raise awareness of the issue, thus increasing the preventative acts toward youth violence seen in everyday people.

Primarily, the causes of youth violence are at the root of the problem. The fire of youth violence can be sparked early on or in adolescence, and may be lit in the following situations; in social groups and social behavior, through heredity, and in home, community, or school environments. To begin, social groups are extremely important in a teens life. The choice of peer group in a youth's life can shape their future actions, especially when associated with peer pressure. "One large study of adolescent males found that some schools have dominant peer

groups that value academic achievement and disapprove of violence, while others have groups that approve of the use of violence (Felson et al., 1994). This study found that the risk of becoming involved in violence varied depending on the dominant peer culture in a youth's school, regardless of the youth's own views about the use of violence." (Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). The previous quote embodies an example of the impacts peer groups have in the environment of a school, whatever the majority is, it's value is the one that dominates. From the evidence, it can be inferred that if a school has a majority population of people who accept violence and inappropriate behavior, it will cause the minority to be more susceptible to that value by exposure, causing potential for "good" students to develop violent traits. Also, studies have shown that children, specifically, who have a hard time socially, or who show no interest in extracurriculars and social involvement, may have a hard time making friends due to their "antisocial behavior"; which has been deemed an unattractive trait by society. To expand, this social disclusion can cause a youth to have lower levels of self esteem, causing jealous feelings, a potential step to hostility and violence. Likewise, teenagers later in life, with weak social skills may experience the same dilemma. For instance, a study by ncbi.nlm.nih.gov in *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General, Chapter 4*, showed that children and teens who have a hard time expressing their emotions appropriately, and commonly show hostility towards the conceptions of society, such as rules, and authority, are likely to feel the need to defy these terms. Then, they may express their spite for these restricting figures through violence. In all, a youth's surrounding peer group values, as well as the lack of peers thereof, can result in shaping a youth's future. Likewise, a negative social environment may lead to violence.

Similarly, a youth's heredity can cause developments or susceptibility to certain traits, specifically those that can lead to violence. For example, youth with a low IQ, may resort to violence because of struggles with academics, and the building up of tension from mental stress. Correspondingly, hyperactivity seen in youth can lead to the same consequences. "ADHD is characterized by restlessness, excessive activity, and difficulty paying attention, traits that may also contribute to low academic performance, a risk factor in school. Hyperactivity is often found in combination with physical aggression, another risk factor. Some researchers question the independent effect of hyperactivity on later violence, suggesting that the effect is actually physical aggression (and perhaps low academic performance) that was not controlled for in

earlier studies of hyperactivity."(Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.). In other words, early signs of ADHD, can be associated with violence in youth later on, due to restlessness, and struggling to tranquilize restless thoughts. Moreover, children may also inherit genes from their parents that make them more likely than their peers to be violent. For instance, a youth with a family drinking addiction history, might be more vulnerable to their own addiction, and the consumed alcohol can then block neuron signals in the brain, "leading to the common immediate symptoms of intoxication, including impulsive behavior." (Butler Center for Research). Separately, for boys rather than girls, it has been deemed an attractive trait by society to pose dominance over others, thus the dominance can take place in forms of violence and aggression. It can also be inferred that a males higher levels of testosterone (a steroid hormone), and low resting heart rate are, "associated with fearlessness or stimulation seeking, both characteristics that may predispose them to aggression and violence." (Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) Likewise, high levels of adrenaline can activate a "fight or flight" response to one's surroundings, one of which could literally end in a fight; the cause of high levels of stimulation. To sum up, heredity, and natural body system interactions seen in adolescence, as well as developed traits, all can have negative (sometimes positive) impacts on a youth. With the negative possibly leading to fast emotional agitation (ADHD), high levels of stimulation hormones (adrenaline) or steroid hormones (testosterone)and distorted brain signals (from excessive alcohol consumption) being potential risk factors of violence.

Moreover, a youth's school environment impacts their education, in that different school environments may make it harder for a good student to stay on track, keep their love of learning, and stay focused. As an example, a hardworking student surrounded by peers who are commonly off task, and practicing bad habits, such as the use of vulgar language, inappropriate content, and minor assault, may find it hard to focus and quite often be distracted by their peers. Additionally, they may feel the urge to "try" some of the actions they are exposed to. Later on, the practices of these groups increase in intensity, and can form gang-like practices, therefore leading to greater consequences and push back by law enforcement. "Statistics show that urban schools report higher rates of student victimization compared to rural schools. However, it is important to note that these disparities are influenced by higher population density, increased socioeconomic inequalities, and heavier policing present in urban areas." (Morin) From the quote, it can be

inferred that with a higher population of youth who experience injustice, and thus perhaps anger, there may take place numerous clashes of opinions, through physical aggression. The quote can also be used to reason that the anticipation of criminal activity; the potential cause of "heavier policing," can lead to more distress in an environment. This increase in social tensions may create common patterns of violence. To elaborate, the values of a youth's school environment can surely affect a youth's future. Education is the key to adequate occupation when required, and the time consumption and meaningful social participation that working brings, can lead a person away from a violent path.

Additionally, a youth's home life and parental background are equally as impactful. Parents who have had backgrounds of constant child abuse, aggression, or trauma in their lives are more likely to inflict abuse on their children. This issue can also be resorted to if the standards of the community make it difficult for a parental figure to properly raise their child. Evidence of the previous statement are as follows; "Poorly educated parents may be unable to help their children with schoolwork, for example, and children living in poor neighborhoods generally have less access to recreational and cultural opportunities. In addition, many families with lack of privilege live in violent neighborhoods, and exposure to violence can adversely affect both parents and children, as described above. Limited social and economic resources contribute to parental stress, child abuse and neglect, damaged parent-child relations, and family breakup." (Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) The quote provides information of how the lack of resources in a community can negatively impact a parent, and therefore increase the likelihood of child abuse, which can expose youth to aggression at a very early age. To expand, there can be a continuing loop in which a youth born into a difficult family environment, due to the communal impact, may have their own children who are born into the same dilemma and exposed to the same casualties, thus, the ongoing cycle. Likewise, "Stressful family environments, such as a lack of a father in the home, conflict in the home, or parental role modeling of inappropriate behavior contribute to a teen's sense of worthlessness which can lead to violent behavior." (Morin) The quote elaborates on how harmful parenting impacts can expose youth to inappropriate actions and damaging behaviors. In addition, it can be inferred from the quote that fighting or divorce between two parents may cause youth to feel that violence is an ok response to emotional hardship, especially if seen in parenting. Furthermore, the traits that come from the then

developed violent attributes, may then manifest themselves in times of need. Lastly, "Inconsistent discipline, including overly harsh and overly permissive discipline, can cause teens to act out. A lack of supervision also gives teens opportunities to join gangs, use drugs, and engage in antisocial behavior." (Morin) From the quote, the last effect of negative parenting could be seen, as unintentional, or plainly lack of care, for the wellbeing of a youth, by not giving enough adequate support and attention to the youth, especially in younger years of emotional and mental development. All in all, children who have good relationships with their parents, parents who preferably also have consistent and attentive parental competence, are less likely to rebel, which may lead further down the line, to violence prevention.

The environment of community, as proven by previous evidence, can tremendously impact a youth's home life, and their school life. The values of a community can commonly shape a youth's future, and who they are as an individual. Children who live in neighborhoods without safety, hearing of common incidents of death, and crime, are likely to be victims to similar perpetuation of those of the opposers. Evidence of this theory takes place following quote; "Elementary school children who live in violent neighborhoods may also experience sleep disturbances and be less likely to explore their environment. In addition, they can become frightened, anxious, depressed, and aggressive. They may have trouble concentrating in school. Because they understand that violence is intentional, they may worry about what they could have done to prevent or stop it." (Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) The quote can be connected with the loop dilemma of generations in oppressed neighborhoods. As an example, these communities commonly experience the same patterns of visualizing violence everyday, possibly from peers who went through the same form of upbringing, may at an early age start a thinking process that involves constant fear and curiosity in violence. This mindset can be a distraction from academic success; the main key for getting out of such an economic difficulty. Moreover, "Communities with substandard housing and economic decline can contribute to teens feeling like society does not care about them and sometimes they express their anger through violence." (Morin) The quote is relevant in that it illustrates another example of how the risk factors of oppressed communities contribute to seeking feelings of revelation and reparation for inflicted hardships, causing some youth to navigate this solution through violence. To conclude, a hard communal life with lack of resources that can further the childhood and relieve of everyday pressures, as

well as continuous exposure to violence in one's community, may set a youth up for possible violence.

As a result, it can be inferred that there are consequences to violence shown by youth. "There are as many as 33,000 gun-related deaths every year in the United States, and youth 24 and younger represent about 20 percent of those who die from gun violence. Drastically, even youth who are not hurt or killed by guns, but who witness gun violence are likely to experience adverse outcomes later in life." (ojp.gov) As it can be seen in the latter statistic, youth violence is quite common, and widespread. Youth violence affects victims and witnesses in numerous ways. To start, a witness, or a bystander, is a person who participates as a witness in an assault, and may not be actively involved but has an equal amount of weight to carry in the consequences, this rule has such significance, it is even stated in the law; The Bystander Legislation, in response to stating the accountability of being a bystander says,"The failure to meet those obligations are understandably subject to criminal penalty." (Guiora, Dyer) The quote states that those who witness a violation and choose not to act on it for the good of the law will be penalized. On the other hand, a student victim of an assault may experience negative outcomes in their grades. They may avoid areas of school or be distracted because of fear, or possibly skip school and seek refuge in other ways, such as with joining a gang, because they may feel that may be the best way to protect themselves. Some "poorer" communities, with lack of the many luxuries, and privileges of wealthier communities, also can be the cause of anger in youth, the effect of the same lack of resources described previously. Examples of this reaction to poor circumstances is commonly seen in African American neighborhoods, where safety, adequate work, and exceptional education are rare. To expand, "Adverse childhood experiences, like youth violence, are associated with negative health and well-being outcomes across the life course and disproportionately impact communities of color. Youth violence increases the risk for behavioral and mental health difficulties, including future violence perpetration and victimization, smoking, substance use, obesity, high-risk sexual behavior, depression, academic difficulties, school dropout, and suicide."(cdc.gov) The quote gives additional examples of the personal impacts people face because of youth violence, particularly in "communities of color." To conclude, witnesses, and victims who take part in youth violence, are likely to face consequences down the road.

To add on, are the crucial preventions of youth violence. "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, both factors that increase risk of violence and factors that buffer against risk and promote positive youth development and well-being." (cdc.gov)." This quote not only applies to a neighborhood community, but can also be related to other shaping environments for youth, such as school, and home communities. As an example, if the family dynamic in one's home life is negative, Identifying the problems (and ones that could be risk factors of violence) such as possible genetic mental ailment or addiction, disagreements of parents, lifestyle, and lack of financial freedom; if identified, can be approached by the family in a way that is beneficial for all. As well, progression may be found through therapy, new family values, or more participation in available communal resources. Additionally, minor acts of violence can rapidly escalate if not properly dealt with, evidence of this is provided in the following quote; "If you see signs of violence, it's important to seek immediate help for your teen. Even milder acts of aggression, such as hitting a younger sibling or destroying property on purpose, shouldn't be ignored. Violence can get worse over time if left unaddressed." (Morin)." Lastly, from a different viewpoint of disruption of risk factors, are "protective factors", "The view that protection is conceptually distinct from risk (the view used in this report) defines protective factors as characteristics or conditions that interact with risk factors to reduce their influence on violent behavior (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1985; Stattin & Magnusson, 1996). For example, low family socioeconomic status is a risk factor for violence, and a warm, supportive relationship with a parent may be a protective factor. The warm relationship does not improve the child's economic status, but it does buffer the child from some of the adverse effects of poverty. Protective factors may or may not have a direct effect on violence." (Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) The quote adds on to the prevention of violence by explaining how people can better the environment of a youth in all of the previously presented environments. A few examples of protective factors are, at home, having strong parental connections, at school, surrounding oneself with peers who value education and a wholesome lifestyle, and in a community, actively participating in social gatherings, and practicing social skills. Furthermore, if a youth struggles with mental ailment or alcohol abuse, reaching out, and providing proper aid would be a protective factor. Moreover, in a community with current violent incidents, teaching a youth right from wrong is a protective

factor. To illustrate, violence seen in youth can be prevented by producing strong protective factors in upbringing, addressing bad habits, and identifying problems and solutions.

About 1,000 people each day are hospitalized from the consequences of youth violence. Positively, there are many solutions to how people can stop youth violence and the factors that cause it, in their community, social groups, schools, and families. Foremost, the key to preventing youth violence is to be able to recognize early signs, help victims, and understand the factors and consequences that violence has in everyday lives, specifically in youth. Through knowledge of this occurring dilemma, significantly in communities who often don't face such problems, the societal norm can be changed from realization, to activism. To close, if increasingly more people will be upstanders and friends in their social, communal, academic, and home life, the common world could be a smidge closer to global peace.

Works Cited:

1. Cdc.gov. "Preventing youth violence."September 10, 2021.
   https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/fastfact.html#:~:text=Youth%20Violence
   %20is%20the%20intentional,victim%2C%20offender%2C%20or%20witness. October 20, 2021.

   • This website will be applied to 2 of the 3 aspects of the thesis in my essay. I will use it to describe the effects and consequences of youth violence in children, all the way to adulthood, as well as many statistics, and lastly, how to prevent youth violence. The website is a .gov, and run by the CDC, a professional and well-known international public health committee, therefore, it is reliable. The article in the website entails a description of, solutions to, and consequences of youth violence. The website will be used in my article for surface introductions, as well as statistics, I will use more fact packed, and in depth quotes commonly. But this site will surely be used on numerous accounts.

2. Youth.gov. "Violence Prevention." no update date.
   https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention. October 20, 2021.

   • I will use this site mostly for quotes and statistics on preventing youth violence. This article basically goes over the ways to prevent youth violence, but not in very unique ways. I can quote this article sometimes in my article but also infer facts from the article to place my own thoughtful and complex details and inferences. This website is reliable because it is an edu. It also has many contributing sources involved that are centers who specialize in this specific topic.

3. Morin, Amy. "Risk factors associated with teen violence." verywellmind.com. June 3, 2020.https://www.verywellmind.com/what-makes-some-teens-behave-violently-2610459. October 20, 2021.

- This source is reliable, because after I researched the author, I found out that she is a,"Licensed clinical social worker, psychotherapist, and lecturer at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts." In addition, she, "Highly sought-after speaker, delivering talks about mental strength to a variety of crowds, including one of the top 15 TEDx talks of all time, The Secret of Becoming Mentally Strong. Forbes has referred to her as "a thought leadership star," and The Guardian dubbed her "the self-help guru of the moment." (verywellmind.com, Amy Morin's Profile and experience.) These quotes prove the author to have a professional background, and an excellent knowledge of mental health - the topic of the above article." The article gives in depth information about the risk factors (causes) of teen violence with thoughtful, unique information. I will use this source in my article for information, research, and quotes the fall under the "causes of teen violence" category of the thesis.

4. Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. "Chapter 4 -- Risk Factors for youth violence." https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44293/. October 20, 2021.

- This site has very detailed information that can be used for all aspects of the thesis statement. I will be quoting it, and taking my own inferences out of it, very often. It is a .gov, and ... therefore it is reliable. The website goes over the developing factors, protective factors, and risk factors that can be found to be causes of youth violence in all of youth's time, from childhood, to the beginning of adulthood. As well as causes of youth violence from the media. This source is reliable because it is a national source, as can be seen in the meaning of the acronym "National center for Biotechnology Information."

5. Ojp.gov. "Youth Violence." August 17, 2020. https://www.ojp.gov/feature/youth-violence/overview. October 20, 2021.

- This source provides information on the effects of youth violence on students, and some of the common teen practices such as gangs, can affect teen violence, that is what it will mainly be highlighted in, in my essay. The website does not go over this in extreme depth though, but has a few added links, that additional information could be gathered from. The website is reliable because it is by the U.S. department of Justice, a well-known, and National organization, whose decisions and studies affect many people's lives, and therefore must be accurate.

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Elizabeth Robinson – 8th Grade
Desert Hills Middle School – Teacher, Michaela Streeter

Stopping Youth Violence

Youth violence is a severe problem that is spreading rapidly across the world. More and more people are affected and introduced to youth violence everyday. Adults and kids of all ages must become aware of this situation. What is youth violence, you ask? It is the intentional use of physical or emotional abuse to threaten or harm another individual, used among the ages of ten to twenty-nine. Youth violence includes; bullying, fighting, verbal threats and or physical threats, use of weaponry, gang-related harassment, and much more serious bodily harm. There are three roles in all this. There's the victim, the witness, and the offender.

While it is obvious being the offender is desperately advised against and is strongly discouraged, as the offender is the one instigating an attack against another, people never seem to talk about the witness. A witness is someone who does not participate in the situation, but observes it from a safer distance. Synonyms for this person are things like; viewer, passerby, spectator, etc. Please, do not *ever* become a bystander in something akin to this pressing matter. If you see something that you know is a violation to another person, stand up and do whatever you must to help. Now, I am not saying you should join into all the messiness and potentially endanger yourself. But I am encouraging you to speak up and do what's right, even if your best effort is to tell an adult of the circumstances. You could save someone's life, you never know how your decisions may affect them. Have the courage to take action and have the courage to inform others.

Now it is time to speak of the victim. Becoming a victim is oftentimes completely unavoidable. If you are a victim of any type of abuse, seek proper help and counsel immediately.

The guilt and memories of abuse lies in one's mind so heavily. It obliterates mental and emotional health. Know that you are innocent. You are not at fault for the crimes committed by others.

It is now high-time we talk about the offender. What exactly is an offender? It is someone who hurts the victim for any number of things; power, manipulation, self-confidence, or even sometimes a cruel source of entertainment. *Never, ever* hurt another human being to get back at them using violent means. Control your frustrations, anger, temptations, and your high emotions. Be in charge of yourself at all times and solve your problems by discussing and talking it out with the other. Never resort to harming someone.

One of the articles on youth violence, written by the *World Health Organization*, states, "Some of the key factors associated with adolescent violence [are due to] poor supervision by parents and harsh physical punishment to discipline children-parental conflict in early childhood..."
So, what are we supposed to do to prevent youth violence? Parents are encouraged to promote a happy, safe, and healthy environment in their homes, provide worthwhile and beneficial education for their children and supporting them in learning from it. Another important thing in parenthood is encouraging their child to connect with other youth in order to develop vital people and social skills. Other things parents can do to help is to engage and employ, early in their kid's life, those certain social skills, reduce exposure to harsh environments, and to simply be aware of their adolescent's life situation.

Youth violence is not to be taken lightly. Abuse is disastrous to a youth's self-esteem and confidence. It robs feelings of self-worth and destroys the victim's look and trust in humanity. It

ruins, beyond repair, the youth's relationships with others. It leaves past innocence in tatters and replaces that innocence with feelings of suspicion, fear, and self-doubt.

I have been confronted with youth violence many times in my life. I have experienced emotional abuse from adults and kids my own age. People who I have known and trusted. I have been bullied in school about the way I look, things I say, my interests and passions, and many numerous other things. I have been, on many accounts, talked about in derogatory manners, gossiped about, and have been criticized all my life. I have found, however, that emotional abuse often stems from the offender's lack of self-esteem and approval. It gives them a way for them to bring others down to their level of misery.

I have had many friends, who have had similar backstories to mine, that have trusted me and I have been their confidante. We have found solace in each other. We have created a safe haven between ourselves. It helps to be able to have a friend to talk to. Someone who you can tell anything to.

I have been hurt and burned so many times, yet I know that there are many people out there who have suffered so much greater than I. I recall feeling emotional turmoil many times. I recognize my hardships and struggling days. I would never, ever be convinced to relive or dwell on those feelings ever again. What breaks my heart is the sheer amount of people who would understand what that feels like. Those dreadful, heart-shattering emotions I would never wish upon my worst enemy. I would never want *anyone* to have those things buried inside of them because I have lived them and know just how unbearable they can become. How they can drag you down until you feel like you might never again stand on your own two feet or feel joy or happiness ever again.

I pledge to take all violence and abuse seriously because I know the grave reality of what such things can do to you. I will take a stand even if I have to stand alone. I will never become a bystander to bullying, fighting or any of the sort. I will never put others down to raise myself up. Lastly, I will make it my personal mission to be a friend to anyone struggling, to reach out to them in any way I can. Lastly, I promise to inform others of the gravity of youth violence. I will do something small to do something big.

Addyson Rushton – 8th Grade
Copper Mountain Middle School – Teacher, Alisha Wheeler

Youth Violence

Youth violence is an issue that most, if not all students deal with. In the halls, in classrooms, or maybe at home. It is important that we put a stop to this and stand for all students and their safety.

Violence can be sparked in many different ways. Including verbal arguments, online/internet, peer pressure, and bullying. Often when fights start, a group of students gather around and promote the kids to keep fighting. This is not a healthy thing for students to be doing. To stop this, we can inform the students of the dangers of fighting and violence. We can "scare" them in a way and hopefully by doing this, students will not want to get their friends or peers into those situations.

These physical encounters can affect students in many different ways. Whether it be anxiety or depression, maybe PTSD. No matter what the effect, we do not want this for students. We need to spread kindness! As students, we can not encourage fights that occur and not make fighting seem like a "cool" or "popular" thing. These fights can bring down students' self-esteem. As a result of this, academic performance can drop and so can students' motivation to come to school everyday. In an article on the website Children's Hospital of Philadelphia states,"A few months into sixth grade, Chedaya got a brand-new pair of sneakers. She loved them. But so did a girl in her class, who suddenly started bullying her about them. Chedaya had never been in a fight. But when the girl challenged her over the shoes, she felt pressured to stand up for herself." This is a true story of a girl in Philadelphia. She was feeling the pressure of her peers and it resulted in violence.

Youth violence has affected my social life. One time, I was in the hall and there were two kids physically fighting. There were kids crowded around them, encouraging them to keep going. This made me and a few other girls uncomfortable. Another time, there was a fight in the boys locker room. I heard loud noises coming from the room, and it sounded like the other boys were promoting the fight to keep going. The gym teacher immediately went into the locker room and I figured the boys got into trouble. I don't want to be involved with fights because I know that the school doesn't allow fighting and I want to keep myself and my peers safe. This is another reason why we should not promote fighting! This can make students uncomfortable or not safe at our school.

We as students can do so much to stop violence. For example, we can encourage kindness and not promote bad and harmful behavior. As an administration, they can be more clear on no fighting. They can have stricter consequences and not give those opportunities for students even to start a fight. They can also encourage more counselor meetings, that way students can talk about their feelings and emotions instead of physically letting them out.

In conclusion, we as students can stop youth violence by being an example and not encouraging fights. Administration can lessen the chance of fights by encouraging students to meet with counselors and not giving students the opportunity to. It is important that we, as a community, make an impact to stop youth violence to protect students' well-being and safety.

Aimee Sapp – 8th Grade
Hurricane Middle School – Teacher, Melissa Riach

◆ The Last Piece ◆

I see their heart shatter like a mirror.

Piece by piece falling around.

No one to pick up the pieces in a world of stars.

Their light shines dimmer than the rest.

No one notices but that caring soul.

Not affecting me, or anyone else.

But that one person who seems to notice.

In a world of stars, billions shine.

But that doesn't mean that not one can be found.

Someone will pick up the pieces and they'll join again.

No teasing they'll feel,

No others to tell,

No stress to feel,

No one else to tell them otherwise,

That they are not a star.

Put that in their minds.

So that they shine bright.

A happier world for those all around.

The shattered mirror is not shattered.

The heart is not in pieces.

Because that one soul saw.

And now that light shines brighter than the rest.

Saved from a self doubt.

And now their heart will not be shattered as easily again.

So let your own light shine and help those around.

Siosefa-Anthony Toki – 8th Grade
Copper Mountain Middle School – Teacher, Alisha Wheeler

Youth Violence

Before I talk about the causes of youth violence, how it has affected my life, and how I can stop it, you need to know what youth violence is. Youth violence is using an imbalance of power to verbally abuse someone, physically abuse someone, or emotionally abuse someone. For example calling someone a mean word that affects their culture, race, sex, etc. is considered verbal bullying. Physically bullying is hitting someone and causing them pain through physical contact. Bullying someone emotionally is targeting a soft spot and making fun of it. Now let's talk about 3 different questions: What causes youth violence, How it affects me and you, and How we can stop youth violence.

Youth Violence occurs for many reasons. Some of the most common causes of youth violence, according to the website(Listed at the bottom) is media influence, where teens and kids live, domestic violence, abuse, lack of parental visions are just some of the reasons why youth violence occurs. These things can cause youth violence because if a child is growing up in an environment where people are constantly doing violent acts, then they will not know what else to do besides those violent acts. People saying things online can cause problems as it can lead to rumors about someone and them spreading and people fighting. Abuse messes with people's minds and the way they think and triggers violent reactions which leads to youth violence. All of those causes have their own reasons as to why it could lead to youth violence.

Youth violence effects people a lot. According to the CDC, each day 1,000 youths go to the hospital to treat injuries that are related to youth violence. Also annually, 21 billion dollars is

used to pay for different costs of youth violence such as health costs, repair costs, etc. Another effect is that it can stop development of the brain, and will also leave someone with serious effects on their mental, physical, and emotional brain. Youth violence has not affected me personally but I do know a lot of people it has affected. One person it has affected was my dad. My dad was abused as a child. He was beaten a lot of the days in his life which affected his mental state. He also grew up in an environment where he had to do violent things to people to survive. He got in many fights growing up and he has also gotten very seriously injured in them as well. He then taught himself about different things and was able to get out of that environment and away from the violence and he is now living a better life.

Well now the question you should be asking yourself after hearing about the causes and effects of youth violence is, what can I do to stop it? Well there are many things you could do to stop youth violence. Some simple things you could do is if you are a bystander try to deescalate the situation. If you are involved in the situation, try to talk with the opposer and avoid violence at all costs. If talking does not work then tell an adult about what is going on and this goes for both the bystanders and the people involved. The causes of youth violence and the effects of youth violence lead to very scary things so being able to to stop it in any situation is a very good thing.

In conclusion, youth violence is very harmful to not only the victim but the bystander and aggressor as well. We should do our best to stop youth violence to make everyone feel safer and comfortable.

https://www.verywellfamily.com/causes-of-youth-violence-2611437
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/fastfact.html

Taylee Tolman – 7th Grade
Lehi Junior High – Teacher, Chancellor Carter

Prevent Bullying

Youth violence and bullying is a big problem in today's society. There are bullies everywhere that have a negative effect on today's youth. Some of these youth end up taking their lives because of bullying in schools. Bullying is not something to be taken lightly. According to the CDC there are about 4,000 deaths per year caused by bullying. http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/bullying-and-suicide.html. Also some studies show 160,000 teenagers skip school per year because of bullying. https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-bullying.We need to ask ourselves why. Why do people bully? To answer that question stop bullying says,"Some youth who bully may have been bullied in the past or currently." https://www.stopbullying.gov/. That means bullies weren't always bullies, they were bullied themselves. It's an endless cycle. We need to prevent that cycle.

I have witnessed some bullying myself. I watched someone get picked on. They were getting pushed and pulled. The victim kept yelling stop and tried to fight back, they were crying. I walked up to the bully and told them to stop. It didn't work at first they asked me why I cared and started being mean to me as well, but they eventually left. I asked the victim if they were okay and they said they were fine. From then on I felt the need to stand up to bullies. The effect bullies have had on my life is me feeling like I need to stand up for everyone. I feel like I need to watch out for everyone. I have always felt that I'm not the most popular, but I've always felt strongly against bullying. Someone extremely close to me has been bullied and it has made me feel protective. One of my friends had to move because her brother was getting bullied. Even after they moved he was still getting bullied. I've seen how it affected her life. It definitely affected mine. We need to stand up. Now some people might ask why they need to stand up to bullies if it doesn't affect them. Well, when you stand to someone being bullied you get the feeling of knowing you could have potentially saved a life. Think about it. If you didn't stand up to the bully that victim could have been picked on for so long that they took their life. You saved a life and made a great friend just by telling someone to stop.

There are some simple ways to prevent bullying at your school. Look for someone being bullied or even someone who is sad. Look for those people and say hi. That is really all it takes. Say hi to a person in the hall. Invite a stranger to sit with you. Just be a friend. Acknowledge that everyone is human. No one is perfect. Look for bullying and stand up. We can't just look at these victims and walk past. We need to see that people are getting bullied. We can look for changes in behavior. We can sit next to someone different. People might say that they don't want to say hi, sit next to someone, or invite them to lunch because they are afraid of being picked on too. Well, if you were to help someone that was being bullied because they didn't have many friends you are now a friend the bully most likely won't pick on you. We as people need to put ourselves in other peoples' shoes. They are having a hard time. If you do stand up to a bully don't be mean because they're most likely having a hard time too. Do what's right! Stand up! Speak up! Listen up! Prevent bullying!

Maximilian Tunbridge – 7th Grade
Butler Middle School – Teacher, Anna McNamer

Violence Is Nonsense

Did you know that youth violence is happening all around you? Many children are plagued with an intense fear of leaving their homes because if they do, there is absolutely no telling what violence will interfere with their day. Youth violence is everywhere and there is not much to do to stop it.

I was only in kindergarten when I was first faced with youth violence, my only two friends were in some sort a fist fight on the playground floor. I yelled for them to stop but they were too 'busy'. After that, I never talked to them ever again. I wish I had done something different but there is nothing a six year old boy could do. I don't even remember what caused the fight but I'm absolutely sure that it was nothing worthy of a battle and they just didn't know how to settle their argument so they used an easier form of communication.

Now fights happen all the time at school. Even seven years after the playground mishap, nothing has changed. A lot of the time, children just want to be right. The school's enforcement doesn't help at all, if anything, it just makes it worse when kids blame punishment on each other. The only thing that could help is having kids stop themself because in the end it's their choice and no one, but them, can take that away from them. If you are reading this, it is your job to make sure that this information is spread to everyone that you believe needs to.

Lilith Valadez – 7th Grade
TH Bell Junior High School – Teacher, Jennifer Duke

Violence

The pleading, and begging

The crying and hiding,

The panic attacks,

And constantly scared

Always saying sorry,

The bruises inside and out,

When you hurt me

When all you do is hit,

The people taking their lives,

Hurting,

And harming themselves,

You do this and it's not ok

Stop treating people different

Because they may never live life fully

Peer pressure and guilt,

Don't make it ok,

Just for you to be "cool"

Even if your life may be rough,

Stop bullying because enough means enough.

Marie Woolston – 7th Grade
Diamond Fork Middle School – Teacher, Rachel Stanger

The Undeniable Obstacle

Youth violence. A dark cloud, hovering over our schools, homes, and communities, preventing light from shining through. It seems impossible to get rid of the darkness. We're being drowned in this abyss that's covering us. We don't really understand the cloud. It's confusing and hateful. We don't want to accept it's there. We just want to ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist. But we can't.

According to a CDC Youth Violence Data Sheet, a nation-wide survey in 2011 showed that amongst the students in grades 9-12: "12% reported being in a physical fight on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey. 16% of male students and 7.8% of female students reported being in a physical fight on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey. 5.9% did not go to school on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. 5.4% reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife or club) on school property on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey. 7.4% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey."

The students in these situations are our friends, our family, our fellow peers. This isn't something in the past or the future, or something happening on the other side of the world. It's happening here and we have to take action. We can't ignore the fact that people are being put in dangerous situations in places where they should feel safe: At school, at home, or outdoors. We need to create places where people can feel safe, loved, and supported. It's vital to our survival.

This youth violence that's occurring affects everyone. Students become afraid of being hurt at school. They fear for their safety when they enter their school, when they should feel safe. Some of my close friends have told me they are afraid of being jumped at school. It makes me afraid my friends are going to get hurt. I don't want it to be that way. Oftentimes when students disagree about something, they turn to brutality. They think there's not a way to sort it out. They just have to prove that they're stronger, more powerful, and they're right. We don't have to react this way.

Sadly, there isn't just the problem of people causing pain towards others. People are hurting themselves. All around us people are in pain. They're hurting. They're struggling with feelings they don't know how to understand, and it's scary to them. They want to get away from it. They're done trying to deal with the things that are being thrown at them. There's often a similar reaction. They go down a path that ends their life. According to the American Foundation for Suice Prevention, in 2019 there were 1.38 million reported suicide attempts. That averages out to about 130 suicides a day. We should be our own best friend. So why are people doing this to ourselves? What is the answer? Verywellmind.com has rounded up some of the most common culprits for suicide:

Mental Illness

Traumatic Stress

Substance Abuse

Loss or Fear of Loss

Hopelessness

Chronic Pain and Illness

Feeling Like a Burden to Others

Social Isolation

Cry for Help

Recently, one of my close friends lost her brother to suicide. It kind of made me open my eyes a little bit. I realized what was happening to our youth population. I used to think I would never have be involved in a suicide situation. I was so wrong. It happens all the time. I still remember the first time I heard about someone committing suicide. It was a horrible feeling, to realize that someone I had known, someone I had talked to, had taken their own life.

People are feeling lost in this world, like they don't have a purpose. They feel as if they can't go on, and the only way to ease the pain they are feeling, whether mental or physical, is by taking their own life. People think they don't deserve to live, they don't deserve their friends, and they don't deserve their family. Everyone deserves to be happy, loved, and safe. We need to help each other through this. We can't shut this problem out. The question comes, what can we do? How can we avoid this in the future? How can we prevent this violence amongst our youth? Luckily, there is an answer. In fact, there are multiple answers:

Stay connected. Keep in contact with your friends. Even a simple text of "How has your day been?" can make all the difference.

Help the one in need become involved in a suicide prevention program. There are people out there who want to help, and who know what to do.

If someone tells you they're planning to commit suicide, NEVER promise to keep it a secret. You have to tell someone.

This plan for change will only work if we're all committed. We have to be all in. We need to decide right now that we want to prevent this, and we're going to do something about it. Show others you care about them and they can come to you for help. Let them know that they are not forgotten, they matter, and they aren't a burden to you. If we all decide to make this happen, it will happen. Suicide rates will go down. People will feel safer at school. We will build a more peaceful and positive environment where people can learn and grow. Please, decide now. Make that decision. You can make a difference. Together, we can change the world.

Honorable Mentions

Chloe Aldous
8th Grade, Treasure Mountain Junior High
Teacher, Laura Hughes

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

Natalie Cisneros
8th Grade, Roy Junior High
Teacher, Maria Georgiou

Ismeal Davis
7th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda Lujan

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

Lila Grenney
8th Grade, Treasure Mountain Junior High
Teacher, Larissa Fomuke

Valerie Guzman-De La Hoz
8th Grade, Summit Academy-Draper
Teacher, Kim Arminen

Zachary Hansen
8th Grade, Roy Junior High
Teacher, Maria Georgiou

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

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

Brian Roberts
8th Grade, Treasure Mountain Junior High
Teacher, Laura Hughes

Jocelyn Rodriguez
7th Grade, Northwest Middle School
Teacher, Linda Lujan

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

Chloe Aldus – 8th Grade
Treasure Mountain Junior High – Teacher, Laura Hughes

There are many causes of youth violence. The causes of youth violence can range anywhere from past traumatic events to insufficient parent supervision. Therefore youth violence can be caused by a tremendous amount of things. When youth violence is hurting one person in a community, it can also affect the entire community too. It should be noted that youth violence can start as young as 10 years old and have a lasting effect on them. "When parents do not provide adequate supervision, teens are prone to engage in aggressive behaviors or criminal activity. Without adult supervision, teens do not have the resources needed to make good choices or to recognize risks" (Witmer). When teens do not get proper supervision and guidance as a child, they are more susceptible to youth violence. Without a doubt, this cause of youth violence could undeniably disappear if parents try to be more active in their teens' lives and make sure they are present in their lives, not in the background. When parents do not provide adequate supervision, their teens do not have a family to turn to at home. "Protect your teen from violent media as much as possible. Youths who watch a lot of this violence may come to believe that such behavior is all right. This can make them more likely to act violently themselves. It can also lead to nightmares, aggression, or fears of being harmed" ("Violent Behavior in Children and Teens"). When teens are exposed to a great deal of violence in the media, they may also become prone to violence. Additionally, when teens see violence in the media, they believe that type of behavior is acceptable. Even though violence is a problem, teens' can believe otherwise. Not only can this lead children to believe that this type of behavior is acceptable, but this may also lead to aggression, fears of being abused, and nightmares. When any of these side effects happen they can negatively influence the child and make their life even harder. All these effects of youth violence can make teens lose sleep because of nightmares, have an effect on their school and family life, and fears of being harmed could keep them on edge. There are many different causes

of youth violence and they all have their ways to be prevented. Some types of youth violence are harder to prevent but people must try to prevent them so that everybody's lives can be free of youth violence. All things considered, there are many types of youth violence that anybody can experience, youth violence can affect anybody in a community.

Youth violence can affect not only teens but also the communities those teens are in. When youth violence affects teens their opportunities in life are more limited. Their whole life is affected when they suffer from youth violence and they may never be the same person they were before youth violence started to impact them. Everybody has to take steps to terminate youth violence in our communities. Not only does youth violence does not only affect the teen who is experiencing youth violence but also it affects the whole community that they live in. "Violence can limit life opportunities, lead to emotional and physical health problems, and shorten lives. Far too commonly, teens 14 to 18 years old experience violence, often more than one type" ("Violence Impacts Teens' Lives"). When youth violence limits the opportunities somebody has in life, it can hurt their entire life because they may not be able to live the life they want and not have the opportunities they want. Therefore there are only limited opportunities in life that they can have. When youth violence affects somebody, that can also lead to health problems. Not to mention that they may have emotional trauma from the youth violence that affects them and they may have physical health problems from the youth violence. "Youth homicide and non-fatal violence not only contribute greatly to the global burden of premature death, injury and disability, but also have a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person's psychological and social functioning. This can affect victims' families, friends and communities. Youth violence increases the costs of health, welfare and criminal justice services; reduces productivity; decreases the value of property" ("Youth violence is a global public health problem-WHO"). Youth homicide

and non-fatal violence cause a lot of problems globally and in the communities that they live in or in part of. When youth commit homicide and non-fatal violence, then they can be contributing to many reasons youth violence not only affects the victim. In addition, youth violence also affects the entire community. After they effectuate any form of youth violence they could not only be affecting themselves, they could end up having serious and lifelong impacts on themselves which will affect them for the rest of their lives. As a result, youth violence can majorly affect someone's social and psychological functioning which can affect their whole life. Youth violence can affect the victim's family and friends because when youth violence happens, it will make their friends, family, and communities disrupt their lives to care for them and try to help them get the help they need. Youth violence does not only affect the victim but also affects their family, friends, and communities. Generally speaking, Youth violence does not only affect the victim but also affects their family, friends, and the communities that they live in, but there are things we can do to prevent it.

Teens and individuals can do many things to prevent youth violence and to try to stop the problem of it. To prevent youth violence people need to find the root of the problem the person is dealing with. Everybody is different, and so are their causes of youth violence. When they find out the problem that they are dealing with, then they can address it and help them get the help they require or desire. In addition, everybody can do something to help stop youth violence and help try to stop it in their communities. "Youth violence is preventable. 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, both factors that increase risk of violence and factors that buffer against risk and promote positive youth

development and well-being" ("Violence Prevention"). When everyone prevents youth violence, it helps communities and the people. Undoubtedly, youth violence is preventable in communities, people need to help prevent it in communities so they can eliminate youth violence. Besides, when people prevent youth violence, we also increase youth well-being and ecstasy. When communities can address the root cause of youth violence and work to prevent that problem, they can promote positive youth well-being and development. When we use a comprehensive approach and use evidence-based inferences we help youth get away from youth violence. "It is important for prevention efforts to consider societal conditions disproportionately experienced by black youth and young adults, including concentrated poverty, residential segregation, and other forms of racism that limit opportunities to grow up in healthy, violence-free environments. Addressing the root causes of violence is critical to reducing high rates of violence in communities of color" ("Preventing Youth Violence"). When people consider who in a community is most prone to youth violence we help prevent it in our communities. To accurately find the best way to get youth away from youth violence. Especially since racism in communities can limit the opportunities to let youth grow up in a healthy, violence-free environment. When black youth and young adults are exposed to violence in their communities that can affect how they will handle youth violence because they are already exposed to violence. Above all, to get rid of youth violence, people also need to address the fact that there are very high rates of youth violence in communities of color. If people address the root cause of violence in communities of color, that could majorly affect how youth violence is addressed in all communities. Teens and communities can do many things to prevent youth violence in their communities, and there are many people actively trying to stop youth violence

Students and adults are actively trying to prevent youth violence every day. All around the country, people are trying to prevent it and help youth escape from youth violence. Positively, adults and students try to prevent youth violence they help everybody and make it so youth do not have to deal with youth violence and are then able to get away from it. With this in mind, if youth can get away from youth violence, they can then get the help they need and promote their life. In District 8 of Miami-Dade county, SafeSummers is partnering with organizations there to help prevent youth violence. "The camps, which run for nearly 11 hours a day, keep children who may be otherwise exposed to violent crimes off the streets, said Danielle Cohen" (Choi). These camps can provide a safe environment for youth who may be more prone to youth violence because of where they live, this camp allows them to get away from it and to keep themselves secure. As a result, these summer camps are helping youth get away from youth violence and then help them be safe. In Elsley, Alabama, an organization is working to prevent gun violence in youth after a shooting at the beginning of 2021 in the Birmingham area. "Take back your children because if we do not do that, then the streets will get them and there's nothing in the streets but death, violence and gunfire," said Regina McWilliams, a teacher at Holy Family Catholic Academy" (Bach). This organization is working to help prevent gun violence. These children in Elsley, Alabama are being exposed to a lot of death, violence, and gunfire in certain areas and we need to protect them from death, brutality, and gunfire. Also, people exposed to these awful things can cause problems later in life and might permanently affect a child. If people can help actively prevent youth violence in communities we can help eliminate youth violence in America. Students and adults are actively trying to prevent youth violence in communities.

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Ethan Brown – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace

Horizonless

I wake up

Not in the morning but not in the night

Not because i have to get up

I wake up from the dream like fright

Stuck in an horizonless night

They call me survivor

I feel like a witness

I am the indefinite analyzer

Stuck in an endless sickness

While i sit in stillness

Lamb to the slaughter

Lead by wheat

To heck he brought her

Little girl so sweet

Crazed by the devil he could not control

Beaten by the ones who loved him most

His family would never be whole

Haunted by the parent's ghost

Revenge is what he wanted most

Roaming the streets with thoughts in his head

He wanted another to feel is pain

Then the little girl was going to be dead

He cried out in vein

With agony and pain

He had realized what he had done

He knew that this is not what he wanted

The weight on his shoulders became heavy as stone

The cops asked him question hoping he had responded

As quick as it happened he was chained and bonded

But then came the hope on the horizon clear

A chance to make something better

A little less pain and a little less drear

He knew he could send out a letter

A message to the world to make something better

My eyes were awoken

The horizonless sun had finally shown

From the words he had spoken

Something i can do when i have finally grown

To change the life of one of my own

To respect my kids, and treat them with kindness

They to be raised in home of love

I said to myself i will not be mindless

I raise them and love them, so they can fly like a dove

I know what to do

I no longer linger the fog of my sorrows

I finally woken in the way i would like

Natalie Cisneros – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Maria Georgiou

Just Why Me

Just why me?
I pretend like I don't care
But I wanna disappear
My question to you is only just why?
Just why do you make sad little kids die?
I wanted to be a super star
Now I'm a star in the sky

Just why me?
Day by day
I make it night by night with nowhere to hide
Im crying inside
Asking for help when I need it the most
Sitting in pain with a demon in my brain

Fighting for happiness
I can't find a way
I'm breaking apart each day
Hoping that help is on the way
Its was only me
Just why me?

Youth violence is something that everyone struggles with on a daily basis. Youth violence is something that can happen physically, emotionally and metally. About 25% highschool, and middle school students have depression, and 9% have attempted to commit suicide. So why? Students that have depression are because of home problems, school or relationships. One out of five have been bullied, physically or mentally. Students are 2 to 9 more times likely to committing suicide due to bullying. Every 100 minutes someone has committed suicide due to these problems. nmSome students are ending their life, because of the color of their skin. Not only does this happen around the world but this story in particular happened in Utah. This is what happened to Isabella.

When I first heard about this assignment I knew I was gonna talk about this young young girl, who was dealing with youth violence mentally. Her name was Isabella (Izzy). Isabella Tichenor, a young 10 year old girl, committed suicide due to bullying. Just before she ended her life, she was talking with her mom about her book report. Her mom got the markers and colored pencils, and Izzy kissed her mom's cheek and told her she loved her. Her mom in the garage, and minutes later her two other kids told Izzy's mom that Izzy was hanging in her closet. When school started her mom had complained many times to the school and district about Izzy being bullied. It was not only the students, it was her 5th grade teacher as well. Her mom asked Izzy how school was going and she said she doesn't think her teacher likes her because she doesn't greet her, but she greets the other students. Her teacher said that her classroom smelled bad and instantly pointed out Izzy, then Izzy came to school with an air freshener to wear as a perfume,

but also the kids at the playground had said she stinked because of her skin color. The mom again called the district, but this time she got a hold of the teacher. The teacher said, "I'm not going to work it out for them, I let them work it out ". When Izzy ended her life the district had said how sorry they were, and they are working extremely hard, and they take bullying seriously, but do they really? Is that why they ignored the case? Schools say they care about bullying, but they don't do anything when something is reported. What they really mean is they don't care about bullying until someone ends their life due to bullying. School is supposed to be a safe place for students to be and learn, but Izzy never felt safe or happy being there.

Bullying is one of the things kids from 5 to 18 struggle with in school. Little Izzy had dreams like everyone else. She went to the park with her mom and always danced and played. Her dream was to be a professional dancer in New York City or a professional cheerleader. So if any parents read this I want you to imagine not being able to see your 10 year old kid grow up, reaching their dreams, getting married, graduating high school, and growing old with you, but them ending their lives due to some kids and a full grown immature adult bullying a 10 year old girl due to there color of their skin. Her teacher is supposed to be a mature influencer, and build confidence for students, but instead of her doing that, she caused a girl with a bright future to end her life with the words she said.

How can we help to stop bullying? Schools, never ever bring a kid down, because of their skin color, stop the bullying as soon as someone reports it. Don't wait for someone to end their life and then do something. The kids and staff are the reason these kids are ending their life. Parents, have a talk with your kids and describe to them what bullying is, and how to prevent it. If they ever see bullying, to step up and stop it before it can get worse. Always check up on your kids, because Izzy's mom said she was acting normally, and minutes later her life ended. You can never know what a kid is going through metally, so it's always important to make sure they are doing okay. Words from other people can really hurt someone mentally. You don't ever wanna see your kid dying in your arms due to these kids and these adults, or you dont wanna get a call saying a kid has committed suicide, because of your child bullying them. Racism is also a big thing that is getting worse in the world, and we don't want these kids to think that people are different due to the color of their skin. We want them to know we are all the same. People with colored skin get horrible threats, horrible names, and they don't ever feel safe. We need a change, and we need it fast.

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Ismeal Davis – 7th Grade
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan

Biological Dad

I was little and scared didn't know what to do seeing my mom get hit by a man, my biological dad. We would move to my grandma house he would find us and do the same thing. Then we move back with him he kick us out no were to go. So, we went to the shelter it was hard my mom was only 19, I was 3 my sister was 2 and my brother was a newborn. It was scary sleeping in the same room as a lot other people, people I didn't know. They see my mom had a newborn so the move us to a different shelter where we had our own room.

My mom got a job to get the money it wasn't a lot, but it was something. Barley enough to pay for an apartment. It was something though he knew where we were, he hit my mom again, so she kicks him out. We didn't see him for a wily, so we move in with my grandma she help us out. Then my mom meets this guy he was nice. He started to tack care of us. He bought us food and buy us a bed he also put a roof over are heads. He went out of his way to tack care of us.

Also, he lived in his own house with his two sons. after a wily we move in with him. we got along with his two sons. Then He started two tack care of us so much that we called him dad. He taught us how to play soccer. He also taught me how to fix cars. A long time after we bought a house together. My biological dad calms down, so my mom let us see him, after a wily he got a girlfriend. They would just go to parties so my grandma would tack care of us. He was drunk so my mom didn't want us to see that, so we didn't see him anymore.

Then I got good at soccer, so my stepdad made me a soccer team. We got good because my stepdad was so good at soccer that we won championships but that didn't come easy we had to work hard we practice five hours a day. I got so good that I am traveling to tryout to become pro. Also, we haven't seen my biological dad because he went to jail for kidnaping and abuse and stilling. And when they pull him over, he had drugs in his car, he been in jail for a wily now. Sometimes I think about it, but I just focus on my soccer because that's all we have because my family is poor. But we have a two-bedroom house for 7 people so it hard.

Life was hard but it's getting better. How does this effect my life, I wonder what would of happen if he stays with my mom? What was the cause, I think it was the depression that he had so he took it out on other people? Also, what can I do about youth violence I can help people and be kind? I think people should be nice to each other because when people are constantly getting bullied, they tack it out on other people and that's how school shooting start. This is what happen in my life.

Fisher Ghiz – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen

DO THE WRITE THING

What is violence? Violence is the act of physically hurting someone or something to injure, kill, or damage them. Now what is youth violence? Youth violence is violence between children, teenagers, and/or young adults. This can be caused from many different things like bullying, peer pressure, jealousy, drugs, anger, and much more. I have seen youth violence happen right in front of me and I did not do anything about it. I feel like if I could go back to that moment I would do something. In this essay, I will explain how violence has affected my life, how it is caused, and what you and I can do when we come across youth violence.

How has youth violence affected my life? A few years ago I was walking through the hallway of my school, I saw two boys looking at each other. They both looked very mad at each other. Before I knew it, they were at each other. They were grabbing and tackling each other. They were not causing serious harm to each other but they were invoking violence. Everyone in the hallway was just standing there and watching this go down. After a bit of them fighting each other, a teacher finally rushed over and stopped the fight. Neither of them were hurt but I felt like I did something wrong when I was not even involved. I just stood there and watched and I did not go get a teacher earlier. If I had gotten an adult, the fight would have been stopped earlier.

How is youth violence caused? Youth violence is caused in a variety of ways and one of the big ones is bullying. Bullying is the act of hurting someone mentally, physically, or both all the time. The bully(s) can physically harm a person and that would be considered as violence. Youth violence can also be caused by peer pressure. Say a kid is hanging out with a group of kids that is not the best crowd. These kids bully others by hurting them and cause all sorts of trouble. This particular kid has never done such things but because he wants to fit in with the crowd he will do those things. This type of violence can also be caused by a bad environment at home. Someone's parents could always be fighting, abusing their children, committing illegal acts, and much more. A kid with this environment would probably hate it. Also, children will typically act like their parents so outside of their home they could let out their emotions in a rude or violent way resulting in youth violence.

What can you and I do about youth violence? When you come across youth violence you may not know what to do. Say you are at school and there are two kids fighting in the hallway, what should you do? You should immediately go get a trusted adult like a teacher. If you do that, they will take care of the fight. Another example is if you are involved in youth violence and a person is hurting you. Instead of hurting the person back, you should get away and tell a trusted adult. If this person tries to hurt you all the time, you need to tell a trusted adult what is happening. Make sure you tell

someone you are close to or is trained to handle these situations like a teacher or a police officer. Those are the main things that you should do about youth violence.

At this point you probably understand what youth violence is. Youth violence has affected my life and many others. It is caused by many ways and you will eventually come across it. When you do you know how to handle it. Remember to do the right thing and things will end up okay.

Lila Grenney – 8th Grade
Treasure Mountain Junior High – Teacher, Larissa Fomuke

Causing, prevention, and effects of Youth Violence

One important topic in the world that needs to be resolved is Youth Violence. World Wide, 42% of deaths are caused by youth violence. Three topics about Youth Violence included the cause, the effect, and the prevention.

Even though 42% of deaths worldwide are caused by youth violence, most are preventable. This is important because, without a way to prevent youth violence, the percentage of deaths will only increase. More importantly, there are ways to stop youth violence, for instance, meditation, therapy, counseling, and sports. Additionally, doing more positive activities and having positive parenting can also prevent youth violence. Lastly, moving to a safer community or environment can decrease a child's risk of being involved with youth violence from the ages of 10-29. A quote that relates to this is, "He said the neighborhood around the school is not very safe. There is a lot of violence." (Morales). This quote shows that children will most likely have a higher chance of being exposed to youth violence in their neighborhoods. In other words, people need to consider where they live and lower the chances of children having to deal with violence. In summary, that is why the topic of how to prevent youth violence is important.

In order to fully prevent youth violence, one must know the causes. This is important because not only does school cause youth violence, but the community can be one of the most important causes of Youth Violence. Similarly, Social Media, abuse, and peer pressure are some examples of causing youth violence. In addition, youth violence needs to be resolved by having better communities, positive parenting, and paying attention to the situation. In other words, people should raise money for the cause and put an end to it. A quote that relates to this is "We're 15 years after Columbine, and you'd have thought we would have solved that problem," said John Matthews. He is an expert on school safety in Texas. Matthews was talking about the 1999 killings at Columbine High School in Colorado. In that attack, seniors Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 students and a teacher. Then they killed themselves. (Newsela Staff). This quote shows that youths are most likely to commit a serious crime due to where they live or what the community is like. In brief, that is why the topic of the causes of youth violence is important.

Moreover, the causes of Youth Violence have dangerous effects on students' lives. Furthermore, killings at schools can be replicated by students, then it can affect others around them. An example can be when there is a school shooting or an unfortunate event that happened at home. Likewise, some schools can not afford to have counseling, therefore it can increase youth violence. In addition, for some other students, youth violence can affect them in ways of

depression or alcoholism. "Deadly attacks by students have taken place at schools in the past few years." (Newsela Staff). This quote shows that deadly attacks or dangerous events taking place out of school or in school can affect students to do violent actions, then others can replicate that violence. In conclusion, the effects of youth violence are important. One must pay attention not only to how it affects students but also those around them.

By and large youth violence is an important subject because worldwide 42% of deaths are caused by Youth Violence. Furthermore, people need to be aware of this situation and take action. This is a key subject because of its effect on youths, prevention, and the causes. A quote that shows this is, "Violent acts in schools do not just happen, Murphy said. Many had been developing over a long period of time. He says this gives us a chance to help" (Murphy)

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Valerie Guzman-De La Hoz – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Draper – Teacher, Kim Arminen

Bullying comes in many forms, but my story was mental bullying. This girl, on my swim team, always thought she was better than me at swimming and always said to my face before a race that she would win. When this happened it would always bring my self-esteem and confidence down. I decided to run away from the problem and move teams. Turns out, that isn't always the best option because she moved teams too, and to the same one as mine. Since everyone thought she was faster they would talk to her and make rumors about me. Because of this I didn't have any friends, I would try to talk to people but they would turn their backs on me. In my team they started to be more aware about the bullying that was going on, so they would have team building days, and started asking people if they have been bullied. I spoke up that time and it made me realize that sometimes people won't believe you. My coach's response was that it was only my personality, they said "I was pushing people away, I was too serious, I didn't talk to people." They told me I was the problem.

Many things cause youth violence and bullying. In my case it was because I wasn't the best, the fastest. If this happened to me, I can't imagine how many other people spoke up and people didn't believe them. It is hard sometimes to speak up to people or ask for help (I know for me it is) and to have someone tell you that it's not true or that you are wrong, it hurts and it makes you regret having said anything. If this happens to you, you can't give up even if it is hard, you have to keep trying, because bullying is not ok. If someone comes to you for help, you have to believe them, and figure out what is happening and help them. Nobody wants to be affected this way. Nobody wants to have the feeling of loneliness and vulnerability. Together we can help prevent bullying and youth violence.

Zachary Hansen – 8th Grade
Roy Junior High – Teacher, Maria Georgiou

I would like to put this into the competition.

I am ME!

Anguish and turmoil, churning inside me,

I'm sick, confused, exhausted, perplexed,

my heart and mind shaking with insecurity

my eyes leaking tears of worry, of dread.

I'm afraid. So much pressure on me now,

the stress causes my body to fold,

I cannot eat, I cannot rest, I cannot cope much longer.

I ask why... just why. Why could you not have loved me?

Life is changed forever, in the chaos of my mind

There is stillness in knowing I can heal. I can recover.

Days, years? Decades or more? I continue enduring

and fighting for truth. The slow agony of your lies are over.

I'm not broken even though I feel so, I have strength.

You made me believe I needed you, you made me believe I was hopeless.

You cursed me, taunted me, shamed me and belittled me.

I was weak, but I escaped. Now the shivering reality of change has hit.

I don't know how to live, I don't know who I can be,

I try to make sense but so long has been spent surviving,

I think I've forgotten. Who am I? Who do I want to be?

Without you, I'm at peace. Without you, I am ME!

Do you think you still own me?

Do you think I am still afraid?

This scheme of yours

You sitting waiting for me to fall

Do you think I am so weak?

Lies and manipulation

The tools of your trade

Seep effortlessly from your lips

Your mind believes your made up world.

All you think of me

The weak, sick, troubled wife

So helpless, so dependant

You trampled and broke me

You underestimated me

You sorry old soul

I am more than you ever knew

And now you will see me

I am strong, despite my injuries

You tried to break me

But just wait and see

I'll take you on, I'll see you in court

How dare you even try this

You silly old fool

You think you can hurt me even more?

It's over! It's done! You've killed my love for you.

You have no control over me anymore,

I've broken free, I am ME! Remember?

Capable, able, don't try to touch me now

Don't you even dare.

I'm done sitting in the shadows, hiding, feeling ashamed.

Here is my voice, I am speaking

Get out of my way now.

I decide my life!

The Perfect Princess

From child to 13 year old teenager my life was full of a sister that believed she was the best and that my family was horrible. For confidentiality I'm going to call her Jenna. Jenna was that girl that wasn't just one girl but multiple, her actual self which is what she was at home and the perfect girl that everyone should kneel down to and like anywhere but home. Jenna, at home, would try to hurt us in any form possible. She would beat us and threaten us, especially my mother. My parents still loved her and tried to get her to stop. They believed in her changing to a better person that was the same at home as she was anywhere else. Jenna used that to her advantage she would be like a thorn in my family's side. Even though she said that my family doesn't love her, all we do is punish her. We would try to tell her why she was being punished (it was mainly for her actions) and that we still loved her, just not the way she wanted us to love her.

There were times in my life where she would run away to one of her friends' houses that lived nearby and not plan on coming back without a fight or coming back at all. That was part of why Jenna thought that we didn't love her, because we always brought her back to our home. Some of my family have said that she brought all the problems on herself. I don't know why but

whenever I hear Jenna's name I always remember something I was never supposed to see, my sister beating up my mom. She did it verbally to start, then she started to throw some punches at my mom. Every single time my sister would hit anyone or try to harm anyone, even if I didn't know the person, I should step in between Jenna and the other person and let her hit me instead of someone else. The weird thing was she would realize that I'm standing there, but would just keep attacking trying to widle me down to get to the other person, and when Jenna would do that, I fought back, not as aggressive as Jenna, but enough to get her to ease off and stop what she was doing. As I said before my life, until now has just been an all out struggle. Furthermore my family is religious, and Jenna was able to make just about the entire ward of my church go against my family and the ward would tell us, "we will love her like we're saving her from the bad horrible family that you are". And, me, I expected because of the type of church I go to that no one would ever say something that bad.

Enough about me, my family, and my sister lets talk about some statistics about Youth Violence. To start, the Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff group said, "In Washington, D.C., more than 2,000 high-school age protesters observed the 17 minutes of silence by sitting on the ground with their backs turned to the White House as a church bell rang. President Donald Trump was in Los Angeles at the time." This shows that people are willing to do something so big that the entire world will know about it. Kind of like what this competition is about. Youth violence can be something small like bullying(I know, bullying isn't always small) to something big like physical and emotional abuse like the stuff I had to deal with. Some causes for youth violence are things like social media(mind blower, I know), things that are happening in our neighborhood or community, traumatic events, even mental illnesses. Verywellfamily.com.

Some things you can do to help prevent youth violence are, settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons, report any crimes or suspicious activity to a Trusted adult. Lapdonline.org. Sometimes the problem is bigger than what an adult or teacher can handle, sometimes you might have to get the law enforcement involved, this might make you feel bad and those people that were doing youth violence might hate you for it but, it was out of the good of your heart don't let others make you think otherwise. In the long run, it might help them more than it brings them down. Hopefully, they will stop doing it

because they realize how much punishment they can get into by doing whatever they did.

Scarlett Lyon – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace

The Struggle

Today all over the world many countries struggle with youth violence. This recurring problem is the one of the main cause of homicide and suicide in ages 10-24 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth violence is a battle that everybody faces. In my life I have seen this happen to other people around me. A glare or a rude comment can change the way someone thinks about themselves and the world. All around me there are hurt feelings and lost souls trying to find their way in this world. I see what our "normal" life has become. We put others down to make ourselves feel better. We do not think of the damage we could have done. We can make the other person feel worthless and not enough for this life. We need to stand together and fight against this common problem.

As a young child and growing up in an age where I am surrounded by technology everyday, it is a lot easier for any type of violence to be used. I personally have never been bullied or physically harmed by my peers but what I can say is words cut deep. They say "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me". But words do hurt and they really leave a mark on people's lives. My peers like to joke around with me a lot. I know how to take a joke. Some jokes go way too far though. Even the simple ones like "oh you are so dumb" and

"why are you so mean" really make a hole in my self esteem. I know they are only joking but deep down I'm hurt. But the thing is if you can not take a joke people make fun of you for it saying things like "you are so sensitive" and "learn how to take a joke". But then if you defend

yourself you are disrespectful and rude. I can not win either way. Another example of emotional

violence in my life is when my brother passed away. I was in the first grade when my brother,

who suffered from cerebral palsy, had passed on from this life. I was still trying to learn my way

in this world and wanted the acceptance from my fellow peers. Not able to control my emotions

yet, I would cry a lot. People would stare and say things behind my back not really knowing

what was going on. My self esteem was lowered from that point on. I now to this day feel like I

need to hide my emotions and put up invisible walls all around me when I feel like I need to

stand my ground. I don't show a lot of emotion but when I do I can not keep it in any longer. It is

an emotional bomb. My family and ones I love are then affected by the sudden outburst of piled

up emotions. So I advise everyone, from personal experience, to be kind because you might not

know what is going on in somebody else's life.

What causes youth violence or any form of violence? One of the big causes that I see

today is media influence. Social media can be used for good and it can be used for bad. Youth

now have access to anything via the internet. One click and you are looking at the "perfect

person" with the "perfect body". Youth get this idea into their head that this is what we should

look like. That is just not true. With this idea in our head we tend to feel bad about ourselves.

When we feel bad about ourselves we want others to feel the same way. We rain on people's

parades and bring our invisible thunder cloud everywhere we go. So social media is a huge

influence on youth violence these days. Another cause that could impact youth violence is the

living environment that one is in. Having a home and loving parents makes a difference. We

have that example of what is "right and wrong". We are taught with much patience and love how

to treat other people. One rule that I like to follow is "treat others the way you want to be

treated". I stand by this. Some youth do not get the love and patience they need. Some youth are

neglected and resort to bullying other students for having something they do not. They are not taught that being rude and disrespectful have consequences. If someone were to show the tiniest bit of kindness to someone who is not as friendly it could change their life.This leads me to my next rule that I like to follow. "Just because someone is mean to you does not mean you can be rude back". I also like the saying "two wrongs do not make a right". One person that I know of who follows these general guidelines that I like and try to follow is my mom. She has a lot of patience for me and my brother. She loves us no matter what. When we argue or do not have the same opinion she will sit there and try to hear our point of view. She is the person I strive to be.

A big question today is, what can I do about youth violence? There are many ways to handle different levels of violence. First we need to think, are they close friends? This will determine if it is a serious problem. Friends like to joke around with each other and as long as the other person knows it is not usually a big deal. If it is very serious and someone can get hurt I would go and tell the nearest authority. But what can I do to help prevent any violence from happening? One thing I like to try and be is the peacemaker. I like to be the person who makes my friends come up with an agreement. Usually it's something small but they leave and feel better about the situation. Be the light in someone's dark. Compliments mean the world. One small nice thing is a solution. Another thing I like to do is reassure my friends that they are not alone. That they have someone to talk to. They trust me and feel safe so they do not turn to violence. Being the safe person to talk to or a "vault" for someone can mean the world. In physical violence I am a person who will risk getting hurt if it saves another person. I will jump in the middle of a fight to stop it. Sometimes it is too late to grab authority. I can not freeze and just watch while someone gets hurt. In this situation I know what could happen to me. These are just some of the ways I can help prevent youth violence.

Youth violence will most likely never go away. We as human beings need to know and learn how to adapt to this sad but common struggle. It will always affect someone and we never know how deep the hole is. But what we can do is learn from our mistakes and be kind to everybody. Fight this struggle with us and know you are never alone in this.

Makray Macdonald – 8th Grade
Summit Academy-Independence – Teacher, Debra Wallace

(All stories in this are true)

How has youth violence affected my life

In my life I haven't really had any sort of youth violence or self damage, but I have seen things that make me wanna cry. My point is if someone is having a hard time with anything that involves youth violence, I make it my goal to help them get over some of their challenges. Such as suicide, abuse, bullying, or gang fights.

Most of the stories in the essay are based on family, and friends.(all of the names are different from the originals to protect them) An example of how youth violence affected someone close to me is.

In el paso texas my father had a hard time getting through life

His dad would beat him, and they were mormon but

there were not very many mormons in el paso, his siblings

would often get bullied for their religion.

He had 3 siblings. But this story is not about my father

It is about his sister. When ruby was in third grade she was bullied alot for

Here culture. Gum would be put in her hair, she would be shoved and sometimes

Even hurt. It got to the point where the people who were bullying her found her house

And put "why dont you just kill yourself" on her window. But the bullies got what they

deserved. This story was about how even through hard times help will always be given to those

who need it.

What are the causes of youth violence

I believe that the number one thing that causes youth violence is abuse from either the parent or another kid. There are also some other ways it is caused such as gangs, drugs, sexual abuse, or even self dought. I dont really know much but i know this if something like bullying or self harm is happening to you dont hold it in through your life, most of the time that ends in suicide. And i have another story i would like to share (this story is about my friends life the original names are not included)

I have a friend named Gus who had one sister named sarah. Their parents were divorced and were forced to go back and forward to each house. On her mom's side she had remarried to a guy named Teri. He had depression but never told anyone. For most of his life he had to deal with constant mental pain with his depression. It got so bad that he eventualy decided to end it all and comit suicide. The following day the mother and two kids were devastated and heartbroken. If only teri would have just got help he would still be with us today.

What can i do about youth violence

Well the main thing you can do is stand up for each other when your friend is getting bullied. Or even help a friend in hard times. In my opinion the best way to stop youth violence is to fight back because if you have good friends they will always have your back.

I have one last story to share about me.

When I was in 4th-5th grade I would constantly get bullied for having anger issues.

They would say mean things, get me in trouble for things I didn't do. And one day I got so mad that I threw a desk at one of the bullies. That got me in trouble. But the next day it got worse. They were even worse than before but my friends saw what was happening and helped

me get rid of the bullies. We eventually called ourselves the yeet fleet. Where everyone was treated equally.

This story is about doing the right thing, and standing up for your friends at a time of need.

Brian Roberts – 8th Grade
Treasure Mountain Junior High – Teacher, Laura Hughes

To begin with, Youth violence is a very large problem in many cities and communities across the country and across the world. Domestic violence and child abuse are some of the biggest causes of youth violence in the United states. "Children who live with violence in the home learn by example and can become violent people as they grow up" (Witmer). **This statement suggests** that when children are exposed to youth violence when they are young they are often troubled by this and it affects them later in life. Another major cause of youth violence is the Access to guns and the media. "Shooting is one of the most common forms of youth violence, and guns are the primary weapons of perpetrators" ("The"). **This means** that when children are around weapons often get abused and turn to violence to solve their problems. "Young people hear about numerous acts of violence daily, and this news may serve as an inspiration for them" ("The"). **This quote signifies** that when some children see something on the news of violence in their community they feel that they have to do the same.

Furthermore, Youth violence can have a major effect on the health of teens and communities. Youth violence can cause more people to have mental health problems. According to Communityphysiology.com "Youth living in neighborhoods with more homicides and have worse problems with substance abuse and mental health and more severe PTSD symptoms," ("Impact"). Which means that children who are exposed to violence when they are younger would have mental health issues when they are older. According to the CDC "Violence can impact school attendance and access to community support services. Teens who experience violence have several health conditions" ("Violence"). **As the article stated**, there are more than 16 different health conditions that are related to youth violence. Kids being exposed to violence have a higher chance of doing illegal things such as drugs and or joining gangs.

Finally, To reduce youth violence people who are experiencing it or have seen someone experience it can try and create a safe environment for the child to live in and contact a trusted adult. The CDC states that "Adopt policies and practices that create safe and supportive environments" ("Centers"). **This says** that by creating a safe place for a child to live in will help their mental and physical health and the health of others. An article by the CDC says to "Tell someone. If someone is the victim or is a witness to violence" ("Centers For"). By alerting an adult about the problem or a problem of someone else that is experiencing youth violence can greatly impact that child's life. These things can also help the child academically.For example if the child is in the care of abusive parents which often struggle with substance abuse, others can assist by placing the child in foster care. Foster care can greatly help a child undergoing youth violence.

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Jocelyn Rodriguez – 7th Grade
Northwest Middle School – Teacher, Linda Lujan

"What Did I Do…?"

Sometimes you would think teachers are there to support you, help teach you, encourage you to talk to people. Though, some teachers, aren't that way. It's possible for you to think a teacher dislikes you, but if a teacher doesn't let you out to recess because you can't tie you shoes, it's ridiculous. I know that what this teacher did to me, was somewhat emotional "bullying". When you think bulling, you think kids shoving you into lockers, or putting gum in your hair. But bullying can also be found within adults, such as saying "you're doing it wrong, well I would suppose so, your useless anyway" sometimes it can take in various ways, but people don't seem to notice.

I experienced this at a young age. In first grade I was a very energetic child. I would be very social and loved to talk to people. People assume that's ok, for a child to be social, and energetic, it's a child, its normal. My first-grade teacher was an elderly woman, I won't mention her name because I want to respect her privacy. Despite that, she seemed sweet, she was very kind, but once I entered that classroom, my mom says I was scared. You would think "Oh, she was just a fearful child." But this was constant. I would sometimes not want to wear shoes with laces because according to what my mom said, "she wouldn't let me out to recess because my shoes were untied". My mom saw no reason to keep a kid from letting out their energy outside. It makes sense, if I had energy why wouldn't my teacher let me go outside to let that energy out so I could focus on classwork. Sometimes, she would let me out, but not to play, to run. We had these little "race" lines and they stretched long, because the younger kids and sometimes the older kids would use them to have races, and probably for experiments. One day we went outside. Of course, I was wearing shoes with shoelaces. But she stopped me and told me I needed to run on the racing lines instead of playing with the rest of the kids. I felt so bad, I saw as kids watched me struggle to run, with my untied shoes.

My next bad experience with this teacher would be when I tried to socialize with people. I was at a table with totally new kids, so I would love to make friends in an unknown new class. I would start telling them "hello! I'm Jocelyn!" but my teacher didn't really agree to that. Sure, you don't want a child talking during work, but you could have warned them. I'm not a teacher myself but if I were a teacher, I would warn the child that they are doing something they shouldn't be doing and that they should stop. But what my teacher did instead was separate me from all the students, she would put me in a corner, with a chair and a desk all I can remember is that I was sitting there all school year, I had no chances to make friends in that class. All I could do is watch as all the other kids got to play and talk with their friends during independent work, while I was alone. Watching. As everyone got to play with the people they knew, if I went with them, they would just give me a look like, 'oh, It's the person who sits alone" something like that really made me question "what did I do…?".

Another way many teachers could really make a child hate school, is humiliating them. Once at the end of the day, I needed to use the restroom, it would make sense if you could let a child go since the bathroom is literally in front of the classroom door. But my teacher thought since there was one minute left on the clock, I could wait it out. Seems totally fine, but it wasn't fine. It felt as if people were waiting for me to fail. To humiliate myself with something so

simple. But right as the bell rang. It happened. I know nobody was laughing, but it felt as if when it happened, everyone was laughing at me, staring at me, taunting me. I ran outside to my mother in tears, as a worried mother you would instantly ask what is wrong, and she told me, that I told her through sobs, "she didn't let me use the restroom because the bell was about to ring and then it happened!!" I remember that day clearly. I don't want to

remember how it felt, but I want other people to know that it's not okay to hold a kid like that when they clearly know their way out and know their mothers phone number to call them at the office in case of an emergency where they get lost, but she didn't let me go.

With all these statements I just made I want to answer how youth violence affected me as a young child. "How has youth violence affected my life?' well, on how that affected my life, is that I'm no longer as social as I used to be in paragraph 2. Now I pretty much freeze up when I try to talk to another person my age or an adult. I can't talk to an adult to just ask a simple question, I know people may think "social anxiety", but it's not that, because I know that as a young child, I could walk up to people not afraid at all, and just be able to introduce myself to them, but after that happened, I can't talk to anyone. The next question is: "What are the causes of youth violence?" Causes of youth violence could be anything, it could be as simple as them not sharing their toy, or as complex as someone going through a rough day at school, maybe even death threats of some sort or something traumatic. But most youth violence is either caused by someone wanting "revenge" because when I thought about this question, it came to my mind that many people who start youth violence either probably got bullied or are afraid. The last question is "What can I do about youth violence?".

Something we can do about youth violence is starting a sort of movement, like "youth violence prevention movement" or something like that. It could start off small, but it would get the idea about youth violence out there and it would be in the mind of people. I would also put posters that give information on youth violence and how they are affecting how many people, sometimes kids, see their life. Most of the time some people cause horrible outcomes, Bullying sometimes leads to school shootings, so for the better, we need to make youth violence known, so people who go through it, could be helped.

Savannah Taylor – 8th Grade
Fort Herriman Middle School – Teacher, Ashley Hauber

Do the Write Thing

Everyone has had an experience or knows of someone who has had an experience with cyberbullying. I think it's important to share my thoughts and one recent experience I had. I hear from my friends and others who are sad because they feel unwelcome, left out, or not enough in some way or another. My parents recently went through a very contentious divorce and through it I experienced sadness, depression, and feeling like everything in my life was so different from the lives of most of the kids around me. There were moments of feeling lower than I ever had before. Like many other teens, I have social media. Social media can have some great benefits like being able to see what your friends are doing, learn new things, trends, and meeting/interacting with new people. Social media has a lot of possibilities to add negativity to your life such as getting addicted to scrolling through different social media for hours, the possibility of being cyberbullied, or even turning into a cyberbully.

Social media can be a strong influence. It can change the way you speak, act, and what kind of people and thoughts you are surrounding yourself with. Some of the sayings that have been normalized through social media have made it unclear to really tell if someone is joking or trying to get themselves help. We have normalized sayings such as "I'm going to kill myself" or "go die" and "kill yourself" and I think it's really not okay. A person's life is not something we should joke about. What if you said "you should kill yourself" to someone who actually wanted to, how would you feel if you found out that you were the reason someone ended their life? We don't know what other people are going through, we should learn and teach the younger generation to pause, and think before we speak.

I've been through a personal experience where someone told me I should just kill myself. This person didn't know my home life, they didn't know if I was suicidal, and they thought it was funny and acceptable to send people a picture of me and post it with the words "she should literally just kill herself." Because this has been normalized as "just a saying" and social media being so addicting, mean, and the source of information for everyone, it's difficult to see when people need help or if they are just trying to be accepted by other teens.

Luckily when people like that girl say or do mean things to me I can fall back to my support system like my family and be able to talk about difficult things that happen to me. When I am feeling overwhelmed and or powerless, I know I have someone to talk to about my feelings. Unfortunately, not everyone has this kind of support system in their life, where they can talk to someone about their bad days or hard feelings or thoughts of feeling like a failure or even being suicidal. When people feel alone they will try to get attention any way they can, for some people that might be posting frequently on social media, wearing bold clothes to impress others, being rude to others and projecting their insecurities on others, or participating in activities that they shouldn't just because they want to get their parents to "see" them.

Every day I try my best to think before I speak, I try to be kind and welcoming to others. I know how I've felt so I do my best to make sure I'm not becoming part of today's youth violence problems. Because of how other people have treated me on social media, and in real life I am more conscious about my surroundings and what choices I make every day. I think that we should be using technology like phones and social media as a tool to help us improve our knowledge and improve our skills or hobbies. Instead of using our phones and social media for a new addiction to create more negative problems in life. Life is so much more than what someone thinks of your outfit posted on your story. We should enjoy all the little details of life. We need to be more accepting of others and try to be supportive because you never know what someone is going through. After all, you can only control your own actions. Your actions affect others so you should do your best to be thoughtful and even kind, before you speak, and be the friend you want to have when you yourself are having a hard time.

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