

# 2014 Do the *Write* Thing Challenge

## Student Finalists' Writings



*2014 Selection Committee*

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## *The Challenge*

The Do the *Write* Thing Challenge is an initiative of the National Campaign to Stop Violence. This program gives middle school students a chance to examine how violence affects their lives. Students are asked to submit any form of written expression to answer the following questions:

- How has violence affected my life?
- What are the causes of youth violence?
- What can I do about youth violence?

The student submissions are read by a diverse group of professionals and ten exceptional writings are chosen. Five boys and five girls are honored at a celebration at the State Capitol in Helena. At this celebration, the boy and girl whose writings are deemed to be the most thought provoking and responsive to the questions are announced. These two students, along with their teachers and one parent or guardian will participate in the Do the *Write* Thing National Recognition Ceremony in Washington, D.C., June 14-18, 2014. These two students' writings will be joined with others from around the country, and a leather-bound copy of the student writings will be placed in the Library of Congress.

# *Ilea Fercho*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Monforton School  
Bozeman  
Teacher: Nora Martin

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Another night, sitting home while my dad was “at work.” Work, as he called it, was him either spending the night in jail or going out to get drunk. Terry, my stepmom, tried explaining that he was working in order to provide for me and that he’d be home when I woke up. She always covered for him, making excuses for everything he did. That next morning when I woke up, he was home. He didn’t wake me up like he usually did. Instead a loud ‘boom’ of something hitting a wall woke me up. I walked slowly downstairs, only to see what scared me most. My pregnant stepmother was pushed against a wall, my angry father slapping, kicking, and hitting her. He didn’t stop, even when it was obvious that I was present in the room.

Finally, a neighbor heard the commotion and called the police. My father was taken away and Terry was taken by ambulance to a hospital, and later we were given the horrifying news that she’d lost the baby. She had risked her life to even try for a child because of her health and because of abuse and violence, that precious baby boy would never meet his family. I was only about three at the time, and I became afraid. I was scared to visit my dad. Afraid he’d hurt me again. I would wake my mom during the night, screaming “No, daddy, don’t hurt me.” Because he didn’t only hurt his wives, he hurt me too.

I remember clearly even though I was very young. One night when I was only two, my dad came into my room while I was asleep. The feeling of his hands where I’d never felt them before woke me up. I was afraid to make him mad, and not knowing what he was doing, I let him continue. For a long time after this I was afraid to even bathe at my dad’s house. I didn’t feel the same about myself; I knew something had changed about me. I just didn’t know how serious it

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really was. This was the most prominent of the events that have left me scarred both physically and mentally.

Restraining orders didn't stop my dad from hurting us. Yes, he stopped hitting my mom, but he still found ways to hurt her. He would come to our apartment late at night and yell at my mom through the door. He said things such as "Your family doesn't love you because of me." "I'm the only one who will ever love you," anything to make her feel guilty or doubtful.

My mom remarried, this time it was much different. He doesn't hit her; he never has. But, even without the physical harm I can still tell she's afraid. Not of my step dad necessarily but of being hurt again. After such trauma, who wouldn't be afraid? Terry never did get a divorce from my father. Sometimes I wonder if they hadn't drowned, would they have gotten a divorce? If my dad hadn't died with her would he be causing yet another innocent woman pain?

Violence. By definition is simply "*rough or injurious physical force.*" I But is violence really limited to physical harm? I have experienced both physical and verbal abuse and I know both leave scars. In my childhood I witnessed many small arguments turn into horrific beatings. Is there ever violence without harm? Can we ever truly prevent violence? Why are we so blind to this abuse? Humans, so gullible that we would go through literally anything for this so called love. Maybe it's truly our own fault, for giving in to this false sense of longing.

I don't understand how anyone could cause an innocent person pain and anguish. In my own case, I've been told my dad grew up the same way I did. He was pushed away, abused by his own parents. My question, is how could someone who was hurt so badly as a child, cause his or

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her own child to bear the exact same pain? If a woman grew up in an abusive family, is she more likely to enter into an abusive relationship? If she was raised in violence, that may be normal to her. That's all she may know and, if not correctly educated, she will be more likely to fall blind to the warning signs of abuse and violence.

Marriage is meant to be two people, joined forever because of their undying love for each other. When this love becomes beatings and violent arguments, is there a way to absolutely prevent that? The small girl, scars covering her body, is there any way to fix her? You can't fix her scars; you can't take away her pain. But I promise you this; she'll spend her own life trying.

For myself, in my own relationships, parts of my painful experiences definitely haunt me. They make me question my every decision. I don't want in my future to make the same mistakes my mom did. I don't want my children to grow up, afraid of their own father, afraid of even speaking to adult men. The greatest lesson that I can learn is how to make and maintain healthy relationships for myself and share that gift with my children, being sure they never have to go through life, afraid.

Marriage is meant to be two people, joined forever because of their undying love for each other. When this love becomes beatings and violent arguments, is there any way to prevent that? The small girl, scars covering her body; is there any way to fix her? You can't fix her, you can't away her pain; but I promise you this, she'll spend her own life trying.

The only way we could stop this madness of sorts, is through education of every person, men, women, and children- everyone. Make sure every woman knows how to stand up for herself,

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even in the most horrible of conditions. Teach all children to recognize the warning signs of violence. Make sure no child has to grow up afraid. Tell the world stories such as my own in order to ensure that it won't have to happen again. I don't believe women will give up the hope of love in order to live violence free but I do think that if they are showed that they deserve real love, the kind without pain, then they would know how to avoid these violent situations.

*Merriam-Webster's Deluxe Dictionary: Tenth Collegiate Edition.* New York: Reader's Digest Assn., 1998. Print

# *Marissa Marshall*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Shields Valley School  
Clyde Park  
Teacher: Lacey Arthun

Marissa Marshall

Violence has been a problem for a long time. Even dating back to the old ages, violence has been a huge problem. In the earlier times, parents could do anything they wanted to their children or their slaves. They could whip them, slap them, or even cut them. In their time, it might have been appropriate. Today, it is not appropriate and it's inhumane. Violence affects almost everyone at some point in their life, including myself.

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in May 2000. About a year later, my father gained custody of my fraternal twin sister and me because our mother was addicted to drugs and alcohol. We lived with our dad in Cincinnati until we were six years old. Then my dad, sister, and I moved to Montana. Once we arrived in Montana, we settled in Livingston. My sister and I attended Winan's Elementary for first grade at the time. We had attended the school for about two months before our incident.

One night, my dad was helping my sister with her homework at the kitchen table. I had finished my homework already, so I was sitting on the living room floor playing with a toy and watching them. My sister was having a hard time writing her name legibly, and so after a few minutes struggling to get it right, our dad grew very, very angry. All of a sudden, he whipped back his hand and slapped my sister hard in the face. Then he got out of the chair he had been sitting in, walked over to where I was sitting and playing with my toy. When he reached me, he took the toy from me and threw it across the room.

My dad became angry because he was frustrated and couldn't control his anger. Sometimes, I also think it is because he has no support from our mother in raising us, their

children. The next day, he foolishly sent us to school in the morning. He had not said a word to us later night or in the morning. My sister had an angry red handprint on her face, while I had no injuries whatsoever. I was very frightened though of what else he would do, and why he did it. I mean, we were just six years old at the time and knew nothing of physical abuse. Almost immediately after we arrived at school that day, we were summoned to the principal's office. He investigated our situation and asked us what happened. We were terrified and had no clue as to why he was asking us this, but we told him what had happened anyway.

After our visit with the principal, we went back to our classroom just as Social Services showed up and spoke with our principal. At the end of the school day, we were told to go home with a kind woman named Barb Marshall. We didn't know why, but we did what we were told. Later, she explained what happened and how it wasn't safe to live with our dad anymore. That really upset me, and I threw things at her and said many mean things to her. We continued to go to school in Livingston, as Barb Marshall lives fifteen miles away in a town named Clyde Park. We were scheduled to visit our dad on certain days so that he could retain his stableness of emotions and gain custody of us again.

He showed up once at a scheduled visit, and he was controlling, but very happy to see us. He never showed up to any other visits or any visits after that. Because of this failure and a failure to attend emotion management counselors, he failed to regain custody of my sister and I. We then ended up moving into foster homes, and eventually, we were adopted three years after the incident. Unfortunately, my sister was adopted into a family different than me, but our families knew each other, so we stay in touch.

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I get to thinking a lot about youth violence nowadays, and I think that the reasons people commit violence is because they have strong ruling emotions going on. For example, anger, grief, despair, drugs, alcohol, and hatred.

I also think of what I can do to help stop youth violence. I have no authority to show up on someone's doorstep and tell them not to, but if I know of someone who is abused and is a victim of violence, I will and can speak up. I can tell someone who does have authority to do what's right.

Because of the violence in my life I now live with an adopted family and I have lost contact with my mother and my father, and I don't live with my sister. I also have a different legal last name. I now am scarred with the terrible images of violence and I speak up about violence in other people's lives because I feel empathy for everyone with a similar situation. Also, my grandmother could have taken custody of us, but turned it down. After I found that out, I was very emotionally hurt and felt like an outcast. Violence has indefinitely changed my life and is totally inhumane and unnecessary. I will do everything I can to help prevent violence in my life and others.

# *Alfred Peterson*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Dillon Middle School  
Dillon  
Teacher: Becky Telling

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I think violence can affect anybody, any time, in any place. I know from experience that violence has affected my life and lots of other lives. In my opinion, the main causes of youth violence are home life and the media. These causes are hard to prevent, but a person should try to stand up against violence when you see it happen.

When I was in fourth grade, I had the misfortune to experience youth violence first hand. I went to a very small rural school. Many classmates and I were teased, ridiculed, and hurt daily. The bully would call one friend Plummer's Crack and Poopsy almost every day. It always happened when no adults were around. Many times in the hallway he would steal someone's hat or some other item. With me it was always physical. One time he shoved me face first into the snow bank. Another time he kicked me in the groin. He would trip me for the fun of it. One day it went too far, and I ended up in the emergency room. At recess he threw me on the ground and jumped on my back. There was no permanent damage, but I could not straighten my neck and it started to swell. The teachers, my parents and others tried to stop the problem. I believe that this happened because he was seeing similar treatment at home, and there were no consequences at home for his actions.

I think many times youth violence is learned at home. If a child is bullied or treated poorly at home then that is how they will probably treat others. Video games and movies make violence exciting and entertaining. They make you want to be the tough guy who doesn't take anything from anyone. Halo, Assassins Creed and Call of Duty Black Ops are very violent, but they are very popular with kids around my age. It has been proven that they are addictive. In general, I think what you see the most of is how you tend to act, and you are less likely to think that it is wrong.

Students need to expose themselves to better influences. A good way to do this is by finding something else that you enjoy that is active, real and beneficial. If you are athletic, you can try out for a sport. I like basketball, football and baseball. If you are not good at sports, you are probably good at something else. Schools today have many clubs that kids can join, such as, Spanish Club, Speech and Drama, Chess Club, and Robotics just to name a few. Most of these clubs are free. 4-H or Boy Scouts are two more activities that are very beneficial and teach kids practical and fun life skills. However, in situations where a student is already violent, there needs to be zero tolerance. That person needs severe punishment to make them realize that violence is wrong and won't be allowed. I think this would work for bullying, gang violence and other types of youth violence.

In conclusion, as a person who experienced youth violence, I think everybody, movie producers, video game makers, singers, community leaders, parents and the kids themselves have to be responsible and do their part if we are ever going to end youth violence. If I witness bullying, I need to tell an adult and stand up for that student if it is safe. I could also try to

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encourage other students to become involved in something beneficial. Our great nation has faced many hard challenges. If we work together, we can overcome this challenge, too.

Words: 606

# *Morgan Raw*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Shields Valley School  
Clyde Park  
Teacher: Lacey Arthun

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Morgan Raw

Violence has affected my life in many ways. Some sorts of violence such as wars and robberies has made me more cautious when walking down the street or going into a large airport or city. Also other ways violence has affected my life is TV. TV shows that show people being shot and killed. This has made violence a way I think of things. Also seeing things on the news of the wars going on and hearing the number of soldiers that have been killed. And seeing the people being shot because they were just protesting against something they disagreed with.

There are many causes to youth violence. One of the main causes to youth violence is bullying. Bullying may occur when one student is being picked on by another and the one student being picked on gets mad enough about the other kid picking on him that it leads to the victim taking the life of the other kid and himself or other kinds of violence. Other causes to youth violence is the student's environment away from school. The student may be abused or neglected and doesn't have any support to motivate him or her and make them want to succeed. This then makes the child angry and causes him or her to become violent with other students and their parents or friends. Also, another reason for youth violence is the parent or parents are drug addicts and don't give any attention to the child, or the parent is always yelling at the child and makes the child not feel wanted and makes them feel stressed out which may then lead them to become angry and violent. Another way a child may become violent is if the parents have a stressful day at work and they come home and they take out all their stress on the child and then they may become upset and after a couple days of the parent yelling and possibly hitting the child, the child will become angry and want to hurt the parent to get them to stop. Also, another issue that may lead to violence that is caused by parents is abuse. The child may be abused and

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neglected. The child then may kill other students because they think it is the best for them and so the other kids don't have to go through the same thing they abused and neglected child had to.

There are many things I can do about youth violence. To help and stop youth violence I could possibly find an organization that knows how to persuade and help stop youth violence, and go around to schools and talk to the students about youth violence and how to prevent and stop it. Another thing I could possibly do to stop youth violence, I could step in and try and stop a student being bullied. Also if I saw a kid by himself I could go talk to him and maybe try and be his friend if I knew he was being bullied. If I saw a kid being bullied I could tell an adult and they could try and take care of it. Another possibility I could try and raise funding by going door to door for organizations that try to help stop youth violence.

# *Noah Shaver*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Canyon Creek School  
Billings  
Teacher: Brittney Kolstad

## Violence

When I was only five years old I was at my cousin's house playing with my cousin who was three at the time. My cousin and I were playing in a playhouse that was in my Uncle's office. I was playing inside of it and my cousin, Danny wanted to come in. I went to let him in and the door was stuck closed. Then my Uncle came in and said "Let him in" and started counting down from three. I started to yell "The door is stuck." By then it was too late. My Uncle threw open the door, grabbed me by my neck, and picked me up. Next he went to the bathroom, with me still in his hands, and threw me into the shower. I was locked in there until my parents came to get me. I didn't say a word to anybody until I was ten because I was scared that my my Uncle would hurt me worse.

Violence never affected my life until that day. Since then it hasn't either. I would never want to relive that day and I will never forget that day. My "Uncle" is now divorced so he is not in my life anymore, which I am very happy about. He will now be out of my life forever.

What are the causes of youth violence? I believe that the causes of youth violence are the child's background, how their parents treat them, and bullying. I say this because if a child's background is filled with violence and unhappy, it is most likely going to affect them. Also if their parents don't take good care of them and act violent upon their child, it is going to cause anger to build up inside of them and eventually explode, same with bullying. When a child is being teased and beat up it will make them very unhappy and build up anger. There have been many cases where a kid has become violent because they have been bullied.

As a child I don't believe that I can do much about youth violence, but that is with the parents side of violence. I can't control how a parent treats their child. A parent should treat their child with much care. When it comes to bullying, I believe I can make a difference. There are many organizations

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that are trying to put a stop to bullying. Bullying is a huge factor in youth violence because everyday bullies are teasing and pestering other children and causing them to become furious and sometimes commit suicide. So I believe that if I can join one of these organizations i can help put a stop to bullying and youth violence.

# *Gabe Shelton*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Shields Valley School  
Clyde Park  
Teacher: Lacey Arthun

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Gabe Shelton

2-25-14

In my life, especially when I was little, I was bullies by the other kids in my class. The youth violence in my life made me become very aggressive to the people that bothered me. Whenever they bullied me I would try doing something and the people would run away. When I tried doing something they would keep aggravating me because they thought it was funny.

Then my mom went to talk to the school principle about the problems at school, and the principle told my mom to have me see the school counselor twice a week. I went to see the counselor for about two years, but during those two years I still was a victim of youth violence. Over the years the bullying stopped or dyed down. While the bullying was really bad, and I couldn't take it anymore I just started to believe what the over the kids were telling me. I also started to live up to what they were telling me. Know I am friends with most of the kids that used to bully me because we have worked it out. I also stopped believing what they told me and made up my own label.

The causes of youth violence are never good, but they vary depending on how hard the child is bullied or how well he or she can take being bullied. The cause of youth violence may or will not be the same as another child. For some children the cause of the youth violence makes them think that what is being told to them is true and they live up to it. For others I make them feel like they are not wanted or not needed. Then other children become angry or aggressive and become a bully themselves. Some children even dropout of school or start to fail there classes because they start to think they aren't needed. When children start to fail there classes or dropout people lose their respect and trust for that child. Also when they start to become a bully

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themselves because of anger and aggression is built up inside them they would start to lose their friends and gain back the ones that aren't good to "hang out" with.

Some of the things that I could do to help stop youth violence is to start and find raiser that could by extra playground equipment and any other equipment that might be needed. Also, I could try to start a program to help the children being bullied or that are a victim of youth violence. The program would help the children with school work or other activities that might be needed. I could also try to start a club that might convince students that are being bullied or are victims of youth violence to join that could benefit in their well-being. These clubs and organization would give children friends that they might not have because of bullies and could give them more self-esteem with themselves.

# *Issac Tavera*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
East Middle School  
Butte  
Teacher: Theo Davis

Reinventing the wheel

Youth violence is not a new problem. It is unwritten in our social code to be a part of life that no one can prevent or help. In schools we here about how we shouldn't smoke cigarettes, we should stay away from alcohol, and drugs. But I can't remember the last time I was reminded about youth violence. Even when I was first introduced to this topic I was taken off guard. It really made me dig deep and think how youth violence has affected everyone, including me, and what can be done about it.

All my life I have been brought up to stick up for myself, to stand tall and be proud, and to defend myself, family, and friends. I believe that youth that is almost always an effect of a difference with a lack in character and judgment. A stop to violence in youth is almost inevitably impossible but can be helped. A live without conflict or violence is either theoretical or utopian.

I was born in America. I am a second generation American on my father's side and a third generation on my mother's. But to some I was born a Mexican. A beaner, a spick, a wetback. These are some of the names that I have been call since I was little. Though you may think it was harsh, I almost always have been able to stay proud and stick up for myself. Most of the time... There were instances where I either felt ganged up on, emotional or felt as if I had nothing to lose, or fought. Weather I won or lost I never felt good about it. I usually told myself that I would never come as low as the ignorant and prejudice like the people who I have had to deal with.

Youth violence is caused by a difference that people have with one another. Problems that those differences cause. And a lack in either character, virtue, or and principle. With the way our society and culture runs has made the absence of violence a fantasy utopian world like that of Plato's **Republic**. I think a lot of frustration is filtered into violence with our youth. Many I'm sure are tormented, abused, stressed, and pressured into doing the unthinkable. These outburst of animal behavior are conditions that every youth is sadly familiar with.

In order to stop youth violence we need to educate and give resources to those who need help with dealing with problems in a healthier way. Whether that be counseling for and individuals, youth violence awareness assemblies in school, to peer mediation for two with a problem. I believe that the tools to help are there. We need everyone to be aware that there is a better way to deal with whatever it is you need help with. Our society and culture has made it difficult to do so. The social exceptions limit what we can do right. **No**, we have the opportunity to set precedence and show that history is not linear and we have the chance to change it for the better. All we need is to be more brotherly to our neighbors and do all in your power to achieve that goal.

# *Faith Uzenski*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Monforton School  
Bozeman  
Teacher: Nora Martin

This is the story of my life and what happened in it. I was a perfect little child. I had my loving mother and my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, and my mom's close friends. Life was whole, then my mom met my former-step-dad, Bill.

Bill, the monster he is, told my mom many lies, and deceived her. He was as charming as snake charmer, and he knew exactly how to charm my mom. My mom married Bill, not knowing the violence she was going to encounter in the eight years she was to live with him. Bill would beat my mom, and choke her all the time. I remember while I was younger seeing the bruises up and down my mom's arms. When I would ask what had happened to her arms she merely avoided the question. She did not want to scare me, but I knew the truth of what was happening.

While living with Bill I saw countless acts of violence. I remember seeing him swing my mom up onto his shoulder like she was a sack of potatoes. Whenever he would do this I got really mad it also frightened me. I was scared for my mom. Another time I remember seeing my mom up against the couch and Bill standing over her yelling. I was watching this through the stair bars, and while there, I remember feeling such anguish and pain, to see my mom in that situation was hard to watch. Even at my young age of five, I wanted to help her but I knew there was nothing I could do.

Many times I saw events like these, and each time I wanted to show Bill that my mom and I were not his punching bags. When in a situation like that it is so hard to know what to do and what to not do. You are always walking on eggshells not knowing what will happen. I knew this to be true from an early age of five, that this "man" was not good to be around and I also knew that he was not a real "man", a real man takes care of his family and does not hurt them.

My mom was not the only victim of Bill, he also hurt me. Bill would lie about me to get me in trouble, and when he did he would lock me in my room for the whole day or longer. He always use to

tell me I was inferior at Math and Spelling, and I believed him. This man was hurting me from the inside, and infiltrated my heart and he told me lies about myself! How could I let this “man” do this to me! It is harder than it looks to not let someone hurt you, especially if it is your “father” who you think loves you. He said I was nothing, he told me that my biological father was a loser and so was I.

Many times I wanted to run away but what kept me home was the love I had for my little brothers. I knew they needed me there to be a friend to them. I needed to be there when Bill started hurting them and I needed to protect them. This love is the love that keeps me from going into depression, the depression that keeps trying to take over my life is caused by the violence that I was exposed to.

My little brothers did get hurt by Bill. When they turned seven years old, he would stand over the boys and watch them do their school work, then if they did not do a problem right he would smack them on the back of their head. He did this so hard that they would start crying, then he would hit them on the head for crying. I wanted to punch him and all that anger is still all built up inside my heart.

To get rid of my anger I sing. Singing lets me yell at Bill in an effective way. I sing songs that I can sing at Bill that tell him “I don’t care what you say I am or what you say I do!” Music is a good way to help pain, they just have to be certain songs that actually build you up, such as “Fight Like a Girl” by BoomShell and “Karate” by Brad Paisley are good for transferring anger to laughter.

Even though he is not around. Bill has caused my family not only hurt and pain, but also financial problems. He racked up money on my mom’s credit card and when we left him he emptied our bank account. He left us with debt and no where to live or food to eat. We were so unstable and my whole family lived in terror.

Many people wonder why a woman would marry an abusive man, the answer is simple but yet

it is complicated. One, they could have been raised in an abusive home where violence was all that was known to them. The men can be sneaky and charming, with Bill, he not only deceived my mom, he deceived all of her friends and family.

To stop violence would be a dream come true, but in this world that is not possible. Though we must educate people even from an early age, we must teach women that they are worthy of love and that they are a treasure no matter what other people say and we must teach men that women are to be treated with respect, love and kindness, even if they mess up or make you angry. I have found that women in abusive marriages do not want to leave their husbands or not go back to them when the men want them back because they know that their husbands would be furious. They know that the fury that their husbands have is not just fury it is a murderous anger, and by leaving they may put their lives in danger. When I say murderous I mean murderous, one-third of women homicides are domestic violence victims. This is a problem that must be stopped. We must protect women and help them through the hard parts of life.

# *Francesca Valendez*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Poplar Middle School  
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Teacher: Morgan Norgaard

Hello my name is Francesca Valendez I am an 8<sup>th</sup> grader from Poplar, Montana. In this paper I am going to be addressing youth violence and the affects it has on teenagers. In this paper I will also be writing about teen use of drugs and alcohol and the effects of it, alongside with that I will write about teen suicide and the cause of it.

Drugs and alcohol is a big issue on our reservation. In my own life, I've experienced using both drugs and alcohol. When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 12 years old I thought I was smart to start smoking marijuana with my friends. Smoking marijuana isn't the best thing ever. I suffer with short term memory loss. I was a straight A student, along with being a very athletic young girl, but I choose the wrong path, all I thought about in school was weed, or I can't wait for after school to smoke a joint. I wish it wasn't something that I started, but I just wanted to be a "cool kid". Something went through my head, I soon stopped smoking and cleared up my system. So 8<sup>th</sup> grade came by, and I started in again with both smoking and drinking. Here's an example for a time I regret even going outside.

I attended a High school football game and I thought it sounded fun to leave with some friends, but what no one knew was that we all had money to buy some beer. We all drank. I drank one can but I got drunk quickly because we were also getting high. I started to feel so sick I just wanted to go home, I was staggering everywhere. I had so many things going through my head. It wasn't the best way to feel or experience. Smoking weed, took me to a place where I felt like I wasn't all there. Drinking did the same, but I remember I was seeing things that almost looked double. My words were slurring and I just wanted more and more.

Another problem I have faced is kids being raped and molested. When I was 7 years old I experienced. There's a story I've never told anybody only because I try to forget about what sick people are out there, and because I had to go through the worst thing anyone can ever experience. My friend was being molested by her stepdad, she said it made her feel like she couldn't cry because of the way he was touching her. She said there were so many thoughts going through her head, thinking "what is he doing", "what did I do", "am I going to die." She told me all of this the day after it all happened to her. She asked me not to tell anybody, I said that she needs to get help her dad doesn't need to be doing that to her. Knowing that he lived in the same house as her just made me feel

uncomfortable. I told the school counselor about what happened, and I asked her if she can help her because I didn't want her to go through the stuff that I had to go through. The pain, being stressed, all three of us, the counselor, my friend, and also me, talked about what happened. I told the two my story of experiencing molestation. Watching kids and teens, go through all of this just makes me feel sick.

Another problem that the Fort Peck Reservation has to deal with is suicide and bullying. I've had cousins, friends, and a brother who thought and attempted of killing themselves. I thought I would have lost a really good friend. When she told me about the night in her room all by herself, all I could do was cry. I asked her not to ever try it again only because I loved her and cared. She didn't tell me until 2-3 weeks later why she attempted it. She told me that someone created a fake Facebook account of her and whomever did this was sending nude pictures of some fake girl to different boys. I told her not to worry about it because there just jealous and fake. Just recently the same thing has happened to me.

There are different types of bullying physical, verbal, convert, and cyber bullying. A big issue on the Fort Peck Reservation is Cyber Bullying. There are a large amount of kids who are using the internet all around our reservation and is either getting bullied on the web, or is the one doing it. I have witnessed a lot of it coming from both boys and girls. There is also a large amount of kids who have committed suicide because of it. Cyber bullying reminds me of cats and mice, the cat sees a mouse and the cat charges after the mouse not even thinking. Teens and adults alike need to take bullying and cyber-bullying more seriously. I found out who it was, just like a snap of a finger, my best friend. I tried every way to see what was being said on this account. So finally I asked him why he did it, and who he thinks he is. He lost a good friend, I never thought my "best friend" could do something like that. I found a way to hack the fake account and I read through messages and the statuses. I cried and cried all night. He was sending nude pictures to boys, asking them to send some back, there were a lot of graphic pictures of both boy parts and girls. I asked myself why he would do this. Was he jealous? Did I do something? I went to my mom crying and she asked what happened but I was too hurt to try to talk. He was messaging a boy he knew I liked and was telling him a lot of personal, nasty, stuff. I felt embarrassed. I wanted to just die, and hopefully he would've realized what he did.

I had a big plan and everything to do it, but I stopped, thought about what he did, I knew he was jealous and I wanted revenge, because he put me through so much hurt, and embarrassment. I posted a long status and talked about how he was sending nude pictures, and it was him who did it. I mentioned his name what he was doing, and how he was talking to my own family. I felt so much better after I did that, I felt like I wanted to just laugh and cry at the same time because it was funny and I was sad.

In my own perspective I think a way we can prevent drugs and alcohol getting into the teens body system is drug testing. If someone came out to positive and it's an addiction, they need to get help or treatment right away. I hate to watch my elders, friends, and even strangers go through not living healthy. Being raped or molested just hurts me to even hear those words. On our reservation I think we should have self-defense classes in school for everyone to take. Bullying is just another one of those things that people see and do absolutely nothing about. I think Facebook, and other websites need to be under heavy supervision. If there's bullying they need to step up and do something. Watching people go through sadness and depression is the worst. If there is bullying and harassment on the web suspend them from logging on for a certain amount of time, or block them from even trying to get onto the account. If you're accountable for bullying and constantly do it I think that our schools or doctors should offer special treatment to help with this stupidity.

My name is Francesca Valendez, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader from Poplar, Montana. This is a paper I wrote about Youth Violence and the take of why I am against it. There are some tips I gave hoping someone will take this seriously.

# *Rachel Villegas*

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## 2014 Do the Write Thing Challenge

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### Do the "Write" Thing

Bullying. This, I think, is the most important crime to get rid of. It tears people apart, sends people into voids of extreme sadness, can shed blood, and even lose lives. Last year, I told my story. This year, I tell both hers and mine, and how our experiences tied together. She was graceful, a dancer, smart, athletic, and most importantly: my very best friend.

There was a kid who was being bullied first, he was a homosexual, but he was really unpopular at the school, so who really cared? I didn't bully him, but I might as well have for all the help I gave him. Which is to say: nothing. Zip. Zero. Nada. He moved away, and changed his number and everything. So there was no victim. Does that stop the bullies? Heavens no! I was next. They called me fat, stupid, ugly. But they said that and a few more choice words so many times. It got to me. I lost weight so I wasn't fat; I stressed out with school and lost even more weight. I fixed most of it, but ugly? Different story. So I tried harder, too hard, and I was easily manipulated. They stole my stuff, and kicked, slapped and punched me, anytime, anywhere.

I saw them call a lot of my friend's horrible names, like they were testing me or something, because if I kept my mouth shut, they would move on. But then they got Shannon crying on the first word, and I told them to go away and to stop it. I failed their test, because they got exactly what they wanted: her. She was so important to me, and she kept me hanging on, and they ruined it. They cornered Shannon and would hurt her in front of me I would be held back and crying. They would hide us well, away from teachers, and we had to keep our mouths shut or it would just get worse. So they said.

Then I moved, and I forgot all about Shannon being left behind. When I finally did remember, I "reassured" myself that they only wanted me, and how in the world could they get to me from so far away? By me not knowing what was going on. Who was the next victim, how bad was it. Well it was Shannon, and it was bad. She was a dancer and it just about killed me when she would say to her parents that she was just really clumsy, and that's why she always came home battered and bruised.

Well, sadly, there is no happy ending to this tragic tale. Shannon committed suicide in the middle of July. I broke down and tried so hard to not show my pain. I started to relapse and have short periods of minor depression. I was hurting in more than one way. I will never get over it, and no matter what they say, I played a major part in the cause of her death.

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## 2014 Do the Write Thing Challenge

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Youth violence is caused mainly by lack of a good role model. Drugs and alcohol and abuse are just the spark that can cause a chain reaction of bullying, sweeping the country because one kid's dad or mom is an alcoholic. If we can get to the root of the problem and fix that, a large chunk of violence can be taken out of the world. And I would just like to add, that posters and pamphlets don't work, you can read the sign, but that doesn't mean you have to do what it says, or even acknowledge it. You have to weave your way through their way of thinking and snip the bad parts out, because proper education can help and do wonders.

When I see bullying, I try so hard to stop it, and to make sure that they don't go through what I had to. Violence will never cease to exist; it is the unfortunate part of human nature. But, we can weed out the small parts, and help control the violence levels on a worldwide scale. We can be the change we wish to see in the world, like Gandhi did when he said that quote.

I'm only one person, but I can make a difference, no matter how small, and that's all that matters. No one deserves to feel like nothing, we are all beautiful, we deserve hope love, and joy, just like everyone else. We don't deserve pain and sadness, or loss so young. We need to take a stand and make a change. We need, no, we deserve to be treated with respect, to keep our dignity and pride, because the only way someone can bring you down... is if you are already above them. And that is exactly where everyone should be, equally treated, no one above another.

The only way people can bring you down... is if you are already above them. Think about that.