

Name: Nicole Einbinder

School: Arnold O. Beckman H.S

Grade: 11

Speech: On September 22 2010, Tyler Clemanti, a student at Rutgers University, jumped off of the George Washington Bridge and ended his life at the age of eighteen. The incident occurred after Clementi's roommate posted a video of him with another man in the privacy of his dorm room. He was bullied to the brink of destruction, and sadly, decided that he would rather die than be forced to endure the taunting of others. Bullying is an epidemic that has flawed both our country and the world. In 1933, Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany, a nation still attempting to recover from WWI. He bullied the Western World into following a policy of appeasement; while he went on to take over the majority of Europe, killing six million human beings in the process. The world watched in silence as Hitler took over Czechoslovakia and Poland. They watched in silence as he threw children into the fiery wraths of the crematorium, gassed innocent people, and destroyed lives forever. Even today, the world is a victim of bullying. In Darfur, genocide is occurring at this very moment due to the Janjaweed, a government supported militia that has taken away 400,000 lives. Dictatorships are bullying their people, people who only yearn for democracy and equality. In Libya, Muammer al-Qaddafi has killed thousands of people, as they rebel for the rights that they deserve. Even in the U.S, in our own backyards, children are being bullied in their schools. It is time to stand against the injustices facing our world, and put an end to the intolerance and ignorance imposed by bullies. We, the youth of today, are the future leaders of tomorrow, and we must end the hate plaguing our society. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. declared to the world that he had a dream of equality among races. I too have a dream. I have a dream that a Palestinian and Israeli can one day link arms in peace. A dream that dictatorships can finally put down their weapons and create a society where ALL people are bestowed with the unalienable rights that they deserve. And finally, I have a dream that a child, regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation, can go to school without living in fear of being ridiculed by others. Today's youth finally has the power to say no.

Name: David Villanueva

Grade:

School:

What a wonderful world it is when we stop worrying, and start breathing, living anew from the visions of hope and equality. Hello, my name is David Villanueva and who I am means the world to me. I am a student, I am a teacher, I am a governor, I am the republic, the elephant and the donkey that regulates my own destiny. But mainly I am the czar and the wise man flashing around the template of honor and respect to those that have not seen it yet. I am the czar and the wise man who can say no to those that bring us down. I am he who cries because the world is unhappy. I am he who worries if children are scared from past bullying experiences. In a realistic point of view, I am that lone man of 5 feet 4 inches. That one guy with the dark hair and shadow eyes that have not drifted far from truth. I'm that one student on campus with the heart of velvet fire that strives to make a change in the world.

I've once been a victim of bullying to be exact, and perhaps even the bully itself. I've been the victim that has fallen in digression to rise again, and the bully that never did anything about it when others were taunted or pushed to the extent of breaking. Heck I'm no superman, not even a mortal batman who physically stops the bad guy, but I am the Martin Luther Jr. the Cesar Chavez, the John Lewis and even that lone man from Tiananmen square that stands with his heart in regression against inequality because it's the right thing to do. And it doesn't take a real genius to realize where the diversity in bullying rises from, it just takes a listen, a simple one to one talk with someone. Its that first step that really makes all the difference. That first step that rescues a person from who knows what. Maybe only themselves.

But I believe the world is wonderful no matter if it beats you up or calls you names. I believe the power of the youth is really who's making a strive to listen now a days. I believe it's the little grownups in society that still see compassion in all us to make tomorrow, that much more sweeter to live in.

Name: Lindsay Regan

Grade: 12

School: Troy High School

When I was nine years old, several classmates tried to drown me on a field trip. The staff denied the incident's ever occurring and my parents moved me to a new school to escape the dangerous environment of my original elementary school. Yes, I just used the words 'dangerous' and 'elementary school' in the same sentence- because they are. We like to think of children as the epitome of innocence, when truly they are just little people like everyone else, only without knowledge of tact or basic human courtesy. That is what needs to be changed, and changed early. Courtesy and politeness are a lot like language , I've found, in that they are best learned young and must be consistently reinforced.

At my high school, we recently hosted a speaker against bully. Within days, the lecture was forgotten unless it was mocked. An hour or two of listening to testimonials, at a time when most students have already developed and cemented the aspects of personality that would encourage them to bully, simply isn't sufficient. These behaviors must be caught early and corrected. Again like language, what we learn first is what we fall back on in times of stress. Simple human kindness must be taught, must be a priority, from the first day a child is old enough to understand because that is the behavior they will revert to when life's hardships start breaking them down.

In this way, all adult authority figures must be responsible for setting an example- but it is the children's responsibility to learn, to remember, and to respect. The adults must put things in motion, but in the end it is the youth of our generation that must resolve to change. We must recognize that there is a problem, that the problem, bullying- is wrong, and that we have to do something about it. Nobody can do it for us, no matter how they might wish to, and no one person can stand alone. As Abraham Lincoln said when he stoop against tradition to protect the rights of the abused, " A house divided against itself cannot stand." We , the children must stand united against this threat to our happiness and survival.

We can do it . If we start now, if we start early, the children can learn to rise above bullying. But we must start now and must start from the beginning.

Name: Engie Salama

Grade: 12

School: Arnold O. Beckman High School

“Rag-head.”

With baleful eyes, I would glance at my oppressor. Too ashamed to say anything, I'd look back down, thus sealing my fate as the victim of a hidden assassin. So ubiquitous, so pervasive, and so deadly to my self-esteem, my confidence, and my happiness: bullying.

“Terrorist.”

I was sick of these tormentors who would spit in my face, yet had the gall to demand that I scoot back on the bus for the privilege to sit in the front. Like a time bomb these people ignorantly accused me of possessing, the pent up frustration was building until I felt like I would explode.

“Go back to your home country.”

Oh the irony! Are being American and Muslim mutually exclusive? I am an Egyptian-American Muslim, and I'm proud of it. My home country is *here* - not Egypt, not some arbitrary place all “Muz-lums” come from - and there is nowhere else I'd rather be.

And so equipped with my identity and my conviction, I countered the comments.

When they asked why is that thing on your head you're not even pretty I just smiled and replied well at least my mom thinks I am because modesty is beautiful. When they called me a terrorist I stared right back and said you wouldn't have thought so before 9/11 don't let a few people poison your perception of one billion. And when they told me to go home I said the bus has to come first and then I have to walk a bit but don't worry I'll get there soon!

And I wish that the attacks stopped with me. Unfortunately, the onslaught of insults continues to transcend all cultural backgrounds, ages, and settings.

Yet, there is hope!

Just as the revolution in Egypt was sparked by the youth, so too will the revolution in the way we treat others start with *us*, the young people with so much power. It starts with optimism. It starts with action. And it all starts **now**.

With confidence, humor, and a serious attempt to combat ignorance, youth can overcome the baseless insults of their peers. With a smile, we can prove to those who try to put us down that they can't faze us. And with respect, we can enforce the inviolable human right of never, ever having to be bullied for what you believe in.

Name: Lauren Tucker

Grade: 12

School: Fullerton Union High School

“Speaking Up”

Society and ideas are constantly changing and evolving as we continue to embark into the 21st century. Although most of these transformations has been put to good use, many detrimental aspects of our communities are also becoming stronger. One such area that can no longer be ignored is bullying. The bullies of today are no longer just the big, intimidating kids who demand our lunch money or throw us into trash cans. Instead, bullies can build their daunting profiles without having to ever meet or speak to the individual being victimized. Texting, the internet, and social networking sites such as “MySpace.com” or “Facebook” have become unhealthy tools for bullies. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, bullying via the internet plagues half of all American teenagers and remains responsible for 19,000 attempted suicides by teenagers a year. Bullying stories seem much more common in the news, with most of them ending in tragedy. Phoebe Prince, a young high school girl who moved to the United States from Israel, was bullied in person and online relentlessly by people from her school which eventually drove her to take her own life. She was fifteen years old, the same age as myself. Phoebe, countless other victims like her, lacked first, the support of adults and more importantly, the assistance of her peers. As a student, I am constantly told that when we are being bullied we should run to an adult. The task is much harder than it sounds. Not only do we fear the revenge of our persecutors, but also the ridicule of others when the story ultimately leaks out into the school’s mainstream. It is much easier to keep our bullying episodes to ourselves than to expose our personal issues. But victims of bullying fail to realize that they can still turn to their friends and ultimately themselves. The youth wield significant power when it comes to the fight against bullying. Sometimes our friends are the ones who confide in adults when we are too afraid, or they defend us when we are tyrannized. When youth defy bullies not only does it strike flame or retaliation in the student body but it can teach victims of bullying that the ending of their torment begins within themselves. And it is this confidence and power that exists in all of us which remains the best and sometimes the only weapon to overcome bullies.

Name: Megan Schoeff

Grade: 8

School: Marine View

Whether it's verbal, social, or physical, bullying can really take a toll on one's mental and physical health. Personally, I don't think people are born callous, but factors such as an unstable family life or self-doubt can lead someone to believe that his or her only option in order to be accepted by peers is to target a victim with a weakness and bully them. Making the victim feel unimportant or ridiculous makes the bully feel powerful. Not surprisingly, the victim will eventually seek out someone else with a weakness, and become a bully himself. This begins a continuous cycle of harassment and animosity.

Why are we letting this happen? When most people witness one of their peers bullying someone, they refrain from taking action in fear that they too will become a bullying target. Besides, as long as no one is getting physically hurt, kids are just messing around...right? What most people don't realize is that seemingly harmless jokes and insults can shatter one's confidence and self-respect. Victims of even minor bullying can become depressed or anxious, and they sometimes resort to drastic actions, such as injuring themselves or even committing suicide.

Despite good intentions, according to StopBullying.gov, an official U.S. government website, even if a witness reports a bullying accident adults will only intervene four percent of the time if the bullying occurs outside the classroom. It seems as though we, the peers are the ones who can create the deepest impression in the fight to stop bullying. In fact, we have the power to solve the massive bullying issue peacefully. When you really consider it, everyone just needs a friend or mentor to feel self-assured and confident. If the child with the unstable family life or insecurity had someone to support them, they might not feel as though they need to abuse someone else. In order to stop bullying, we, the witnesses, the victims, and even the bullies need to take a stand and break the bullying cycle.

Name: Yvette Cuevas

Grade: 9

School: Katella High School

No one will ever understand the pain one gets through bullying. It's not a joke. We started this and we can end this. Yes, it's hard to believe we can cause indescribable pain to our peers, but that doesn't mean it doesn't happen. We the bullies live with guilt, & we the victims live with fear.

Bullies, the dreaded kind-of-embarrassing subjects for teens out there. We cannot continue on while thousands of kids and suffering. It does affect us, on a whole other level, & until people realize that it will be too late. Of course it won't be easy. So let's start with awareness. Awareness *is* key here because we need to pay attention to the signs. Pay attention to your kids, pay attention to your friends.

We got to understand what's going on. Why is this being done? What's the problem? It could just all be terrible misunderstand, most likely no. Kids will be kids. A bully in the dictionary is defined as a quarrelsome person who frightens, threatens, or hurts smaller or weaker people. Sounds about right, but it's not just the smaller or weaker. It's the so call "different".

Yeah, we are aware now that bullying has taken a toll of many different reasons now. Race, Religion, Sexual Preference, anything, even looks & personality. It's not right to put someone down so harshly & no one, under no circumstances deserves to be bullies. It's also not right to go through it alone. Please say something.

Telling someone isn't easy, I know, trust me. The thing is if you don't speak up you'll end up more broken down then you may already be. Help will come soon after you say something. We will stop. We will find a way. The thing is I don't know when. Just hang on kids & know you are not alone.