

## Introduction

The work in this anthology was written by 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Ms. Uter and Ms. Inzana's ELA class during the 2021-2022 school year. Teaching artist, Cynthia Larsen, from Lake Erie Ink: a writing space for youth, spent one day a week at Mary McLeod Bethune, thanks to a Teach Arts Ohio Grant from the Ohio Arts Council.

This anthology also includes work from an additional series of workshops with Ms. Larsen and funded by the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage. Students wrote Stop the Hate essays about their experiences with hate, bullying and discrimination.

We wish our 7<sup>th</sup> graders a fabulous and safe summer and hope they continue to use their voices to express themselves, to stand up for themselves and others, and to help change the world and make it a better place for everyone!



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# Golden Shovel Poems

Golden Shovel Poems are a fun way to write a poem by using a line from another published poem. Poets choose a line from the poem, and then they use each word at the end of each line of their poem. The Golden Shovel is a reference to Gwendolyn Brook's poem, "We Real Cool," which inspired the first Golden Shovel poems. The poems students selected were chosen from the book *One Last Word*, by Nikki Grimes.

When a poet writes a poem inspired by another poem or quoting another poem, they often title the poem, "After... (the name of the poem or poet)"

After "My Soul Has Grown Deep Like The Rivers" by Langston Hughes  
Alexis A.

I'm so proud of myself and **MY**.  
Mom also said she was also proud of me and my **SOUL**.  
Just blew up with happiness my hard work **HAS**  
Paid off. I think I'm small but my mom said I've **GROWN**.  
I sometimes believe her but **DEEP**  
Down I know she is just trying to make me feel better and that is what I **LIKE**.  
About my mom sometimes I feel like **THE**  
The world is going to swallow me deep down the **RIVER**.

Should I include myself in the we  
by Najah S.

Should I include myself in the **we**  
Or shall I remove myself and **live**  
Anonymous and leave all cluelessness as to who I am **and**  
roam around unknown, thinking about **how**  
This would make other people feel, **intense?**  
Maybe but they might feel as if life **is**  
Not worth it and leave them thinking, **life?**  
**Inspired by Clara Ann Thompson's Poem**  
**"Life and Death"**

After "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes  
Destiny P.

1

Well if you lived like me then you would live an ok **life**.  
If you say you hate life then **for**  
You, it must be worse because **me**,  
I have been through goods and bads and if it **ain't**  
My way then I don't like it. I **been**  
Annoyed and irritated for **no**  
Reason. I want a **crystal**.  
But I can't get it. So I stomp up the **stairs**  
And I slam the door the maddest I've ever been.

2

Why is this a dangerous **life**?  
Why do people think it's a problem **for**  
blacks to act the way they do. **Me**  
I'm not talking about the blacks in any type of way. It **ain't**  
Never been a time when I have **been**  
Laced, chased or erased. So **no**  
I don't run, I chase and find a way. Why does everyone want a **crystal**?  
There ain't nothing more to say. There isn't not one more **stair**!

After "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes  
DaKa'la S.

I am powerful and strong, from the top to the bottom of **My**  
Shoes. I am graceful like the swans in the lake. Within my **Soul**  
I smell the rich nice soil that **Has**  
Freshly new nice grass that just **Grown**.  
Through the thick and the thin I know I'm perfect. **Deep**  
Down inside of me I know that I can rise high in the sky **Like**  
The sun on its horizon, Like the tides in the ocean. From **The**  
Skis to the trees to the **river**.

After "Storm Ending" by Jean Toomer  
DaKa'la S.

My soul is like **Thunder**  
It brightens up a room like the **blossoms**  
Form a blossom tree. As they **gorgeously**  
Fall, all the worries go up and **above**  
Your head. As we sit **our**  
Brains relax so we don't lose our **heads**

After "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes  
Giovanni H.

"The Eternal void is like looking into a deep dark Well.  
Just knowing that eternal darkness lies ahead". I told my Son  
"You should always look for at least a bit of light. I'll  
Always be here to Tell  
You that I will keep going, I will always be here to tell you".

After "Hope" by Georgia Douglas Johnson  
Giovanni H.

The story of a powerful king who was as Frail  
As a autumn leaf grew up to be one of the Children  
To have gained and lost a great deal Of  
Power. This story brings great joy, suspense, and Sorrow  
But there is a part where he was Dethroned  
By the same person who helped him get to the top. By  
The way, this person was a mere boy (17 to be exact.) A  
Boy who learned the true meaning of Manhood, A boy named Hue.

After "We Wear The Mask" by Paul Laurence Dunbar  
Judith C.

Everyone has secrets that **we**  
Would like to keep quiet we all **wear**  
Things we wish we hadn't say things we wish could be taken back **the**  
Thing is we all wear a **mask**

After "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes  
Judith C.

People will always try to put you down **for**  
They don't know what you have been through sometimes you have to say **I'se**  
Am not what they think I am. You have to remember that you are **still**  
Strong and so much more than them. You have to say I'm **going**  
To keep what's important to me close because **honey**  
I love **myself**

After "Common Dust" by Georgia Douglas Johnson  
Dominic H.

Me and my friend asked can we got to the park. On our way a man stopped us and said, "**Who**  
Can point me to the store?" We was raised to be nice to our elders so we **shall**  
point this man to the store. He gets in between us so we can help him walk. We **separate**  
and guide him to the store. The store is by the park. We take him to **the**  
Store door. And when we saw him come out he went away like the blowing **dust**.

After "A Safe Place" by Nikki Grimes  
Amariyia A.

Someone had a **Dream**.  
That someone was a dream **Killer**;  
The dream killer was killing people on the **Daily**.  
Someone was across the looking and **stalk**;  
The person was the dream killer **The**  
While on the **Street**.  
Is me and my friend and **You**.  
Me and my friend is sitting over there **And**  
You and your friend is being nice to me and **I**.

After "Hope" by Georgia Douglas Johnson  
Eriana P.

Us blacks had to risk everything for **the**  
Rights we wanted this isn't the great **world**  
I know we could rise our community **has**  
A Huge bond that we lost but **its**  
Only temporary for now we know we **own**  
This neighborhood just step by step **motion**  
By motion and whites, black hispanics **all**  
RISE RISE RISE and i promise **things**  
Will be perfect that bond will be found violence **pass**  
Everyone will live freely and give off kindness **away**  
From our dark dark past. We will **rise**

If my voice can--

My Voice Can Be Specific  
Austin F.

My voice can make others laugh  
My voice can convince



My voice can be specific  
My voice can get me into trouble  
My voice can project thoughts  
My voice can influence  
My voice can be empowering  
My voice can change minds  
My voice can justify

## My Voice Can Make A Butterfly Sing Will F.

If my voice can cheer someone up  
It can make a butterfly sing  
It can make bells ring  
It can make a person not give  
It can make a baby stop crying  
It can make people stop bullying  
It can make or break company church

## My Voice is Powerful Lilleonna T.

If my voice could identify me as a person, what else can my voice do?  
My voice can fight (protest) BLM  
My voice can save a life  
My voice can make people happy  
My voice can sing or rap  
My voice can tell people how I feel  
My voice can sometimes get me in lots of trouble  
my voice can read books  
My voice can speak for others  
My voice can help me meet new people  
My voice is very powerful

## My Voice

Cha'Neve L.

*If my voice can confront people what else can it do .....*

*My voice can stand up for myself and others*

*My voice can bring peace to others*

*My voice can stop bullying*

*My voice can get me in trouble*

*My voice can say nice things to others*

*My voice read out loud in class*

*My voice can sometimes annoy others*

*My voice can inspire other people to do the right thing*

*My voice can make someone's frown to a smile*

*My voice can meet my new friends*

If my voice can rap...

Tarell G.

If my voice can rap what else can it do

My voice can calm a crying child

My voice can sometimes get me in trouble

My voice can make me help people

My voice can talk to people

My voice can sing bedtime stories

My voice can tell people what not to do

## My Voice Can Empower Destiny P.

If my voice can tell a joke, what else can it do?  
My voice can cheer  
My voice can inspire  
My voice can hurt  
My voice can heal  
My voice can say no  
My voice can get me in trouble  
My voice can get on my mom's nerves  
My voice can make a friend  
My voice can persuade  
My voice can succeed  
My voice can teach  
My voice can read  
My voice can respect  
My voice can stop the hate  
My voice can empower

## My Voice is Strong Dominic H.

If my voice can solve problems, what else can it do?  
My voice can sing "Man in the Mirror"  
My voice can make someone's day  
My voice can persuade  
My voice is strong

If my voice can tell a story, what else can it do?  
My voice can express my feelings  
My voice can tell my past trauma  
My voice can also stop drama  
My voice is stalwart

## My Powerful Voice Edward S.

If my voice can make me laugh. What else can it do?  
My voice can ask for help.  
My voice can sing "left, right."  
My voice can give compliments  
My voice can make friend  
My voice can make me help people in need  
My can inspire me for the person who I am.  
My voice can give me power.  
My voice can anger people.

## If my voice can inspire what else can it do? Eriana P.

My voice can make a change  
My voice can teach my younger siblings pros and cons about life  
My voice is unique  
My voice can stop the rain from pouring  
my voice can heal  
My voice can make someone's day  
My voice can hurt  
My voice can respect  
My voice can change the world  
My voice can love  
My voice is what makes me myself

## My Voice Can Break Walls Ge'Sean N.

If my voice can calm, what else could it do?  
my voice can talk  
My voice can sing  
My voice can rap  
My voice can give compliments  
My voice can stop the the water from rising  
My voice resist  
My voice can stop a cop from killing people  
My voice can stop people from saging  
My voice can break the walls

## My Voice Can Lead Giovanni H.

If my voice can assist someone in need... What else can it do?

My voice can lead  
My voice can start a movement  
My voice can not be taken  
My voice can encourage  
My voice can be independent  
My voice can be unified with others  
My voice can heal a broken soul  
My voice can have a sense of humor  
My voice is intelligent

## What Else Can My Voice Do? Govani S.

If my voice can persuade people what else could it do.  
My voice can cheer—what else it can do.  
My voice keeps people calm. What else can it do?  
My voice can say yes, what else can it do?  
My voice can inspire people. What else can it do?  
My voice can help out a person. What else can it do?  
My voice can keep a person safe. What else can it do?  
If my voice can get Ms. Uter to yell, what else can it do?  
My voice can make a person do the right thing. What else can it do?  
If my voice can make people laugh, what else can it do...

## My Voice Can Do Anything Najah S.

If my voice can change minds what else can it do  
My voice could give encouragement  
My voice could make someone's day  
My voice can make someone who wants to leave, stay  
My voice can persuade  
My voice could make two people hate each other  
My voice can make a daughter love her mother  
My voice could make someone cry or laugh  
My voice could make my brother take a bath  
My voice can do anything... on folks nem grave

## If my voice can sing Judith C.

If my voice can sing, what else could it do?  
My voice can stand up to bullying  
My voice can change the world  
My voice can make a difference  
My voice can inspire others  
My voice can make a change  
My voice can make my mother proud  
My voice can stop hate  
My voice can make someone's day  
My voice can turn someone's frown upside down  
My voice can change the future  
My voice can do anything

## My Voice Theonte

If my voice can tell people to stop yelling what else can it do,  
My voice can yell when I am mad  
My voice can calm me down when I am upset  
My voice can say no when someone is telling you to die  
My voice can speak when I want to talk  
My voice can be silence when I am talking  
My voice can make a loud noise to scare people  
My voice can sing when I am listening to a song  
My voice can give Ms. Uter a headace  
My voice can keep me awake  
My voice can talk to my teacher  
My voice can give everybody a break  
My voice can make me a working student

## My Voice Can Give Happiness! Travelle B.

If my voice can give happiness, what else can it do?  
My voice can make money  
My voice can make peace  
My voice can make love  
My voice can make a dove fly  
My voice can sing songs that everyone likes  
My voice can cure all covid  
My voice can cure cancer  
My voice can fix bones  
My voice can cure depression  
My voice can make everything free.

## My Voice Can Stop a Fight Turan B.

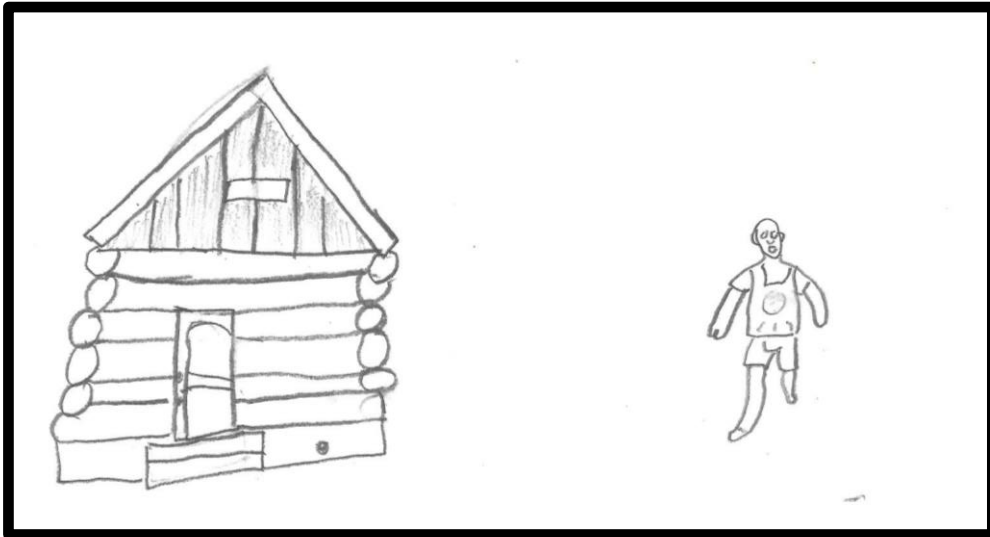
If my voice can stop a fight what else can it do?  
If my voice can ask for help  
If my voice is can make someone feel better  
If my voice can help someone  
If my voice can say no to bad things  
If my voice can teach kids  
If my voice can save a life  
If my voice can make someone day  
If my voice can create love  
If my voice can make a friend  
If my voice can stop hurting



# Stories about the Lost Children of Sudan

## Three Lost Boys

Theonte, Antonio and Austin

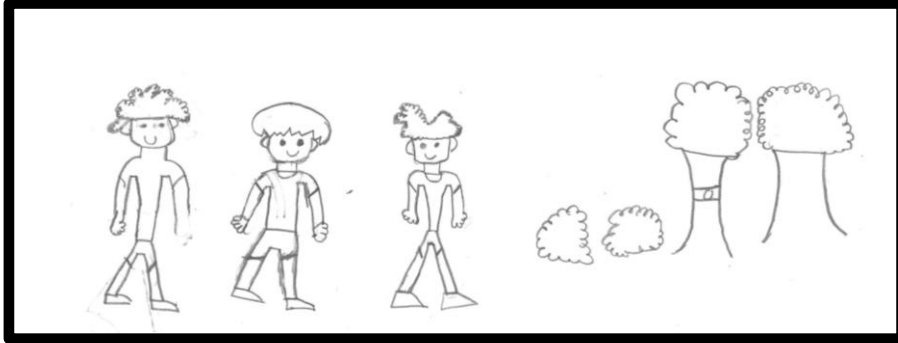


A boy named Peter lived in his wood house. He lived in a village in South Sudan with his friends John and Hamone. One day in school they were studying Arabic when they heard a bunch of commotion. There were screams and gunfire. Their teacher said, "Quickly, run into the bush and hide."

The three boys ran into the bush, away from the village. They saw a man with a gun and hid from him. They slept in the African bush all night long and in the morning they met some people who said, "Don't go back. Head for the Nile River and you will find a refugee camp on the other side."

Peter, John and Hamone were walking across the savannah for weeks. Then they see tall grass and they see honey so that they can eat. After they saw honey and grass they also saw lions that were walking and then they walked away. After they saw the lion they walked and then saw an antelope. Then they walked away again.

After they were walking for weeks they saw the Nile river. After they saw the Nile river they saw boats and then went on to go to the refugee camp.



Then they got off the boats and they were in the Akobo desert. After they were in the Akobo desert they were there for some days. They were getting tired of walking. They were tired of walking but they saw the Refugee camp and then sat down.

When they reached the refugee camp they sat down to cool off for walking too long. After they sat down they saw a family member to take care of them. The person that took care of them was Peter's uncle named Jack.

They were there for some days, then they were walking around the refugee camp and they saw some soldiers. The soldiers chased them away to the Gilo river. They jumped in the river. Before they could reach the other side there crocodiles were in the water. They were swimming.

Then they walked for many months.

They got to the refugee camp in Kenya finally.

They met some boys who were there. They told the boys that they were trying to get to the United States. They wait there and they learn some English. They learned how to speak English.

They learned English and they told the people that they were trying to go to the United States. They were waiting for years. After they waited for years they went to the airport and they got 4 plane tickets to go to the United States.

They got on the plane to see what it would be like in the United States. They arrived in the United States and they were walking to some people that they know there. Peter saw his mom. His mom took him to his house.

Peter lived with his mom to see how it was like not having a son around. His mom said that "I was good because I knew that you were comin but I did not know how you would get here." His mom let him stay there and he had a different room and he had a bed. He did not know that there were going to be beds here. His mom said, "You've been in South Sudan for a long time."

The other boys had stayed with Peter's mom and they were going to sleep on couches because she had a lot of couches.

Then they woke up to go to their new school. When they got to their new school people did not know the new kids so they told their names– Hamone, John, and Peter and they all lived happily ever after.

## The Four Lost Girls of Sudan

Dominic, Judith, Destiny, Alexis

One early morning I was at a well fetching water. "Hi," said Akua.

"Umm hi," said I. All of a sudden we hear gunshots like, "BOOM BOOM BOOM".

We hid behind a bush.

After we had been hiding for hours the gunshots, bombs, and screaming stopped... As we came out of the bushes, a very skinny, short little girl with two different colored eyes and brown hair came up to them with tears in her eyes.

"Hi," I said. "How old are you?"

"Nine," she said in a shaky voice.

"What is your name?" asked Akua.

"My name is Ajah," she said, coughing.

Another girl started running over there.

"OMG SIS ARE YOU OK?" said Akua.

"NO I HEARD GUNSHOTS AND CAME TO SEE IF YOU WERE OK," said

Akua's sister.

"Who is this girl," said R.

"My name is Amma. I am Akua's sister."

"Well we need to stop talking and help this little girl," I said.

"I just want to go home... Please just help me get back home," said Ajah.

Gunshots came from behind us. We all started to run, then Ajah fell.

I went back to help her. "ARE YOU OK?" I said.

"Yes, I haven't eaten or drank water in days so I am just weak," said Ajah. Then we started running to some bushes and we ran for 8 hours and were now in the African Savannah. We saw many animals. We were hot, then we spotted a deer, killed it and ate it by trapping it with vines we had found. After we ate, we spotted another little girl, but she was slowly dying. Akua sat down and tried to save her, but it was too late.

We ran for ten weeks and ended up at the Nile river, where we collected fish and water and saw boats and got on a boat that took us to the Akobo desert. When we got off the boat we saw a lot of sand, cactus, bushes. We were worried about the heat and how much water we had left. We found a place in the desert to sleep. Then the next morning we woke up and started our journey because we figured out that our villages had a war going on and we didn't want to be a part of that. We drank so much water that we ran out because it was so hot. Then Ajah had spotted a camp up ahead and we had finally made it to the first refugee camp in Ethiopia.

When we got to the refugee camp, we saw a lot of tents, but to our luck our first dinner was done. It looked like a lot of food but there was really little food because of how many people were there. Then we went to a tent together. We stayed a long time in that camp.

After being in the camp for six years Ethiopian soldiers came and chased all of us in the camps away.

We ran from the soldiers. They were shooting at us. Many people fell in the Gilo river where we found out that there were crocodiles.

We swam really fast but then Ajah started sinking. So Amma had to swim back and save her. Then after swimming through the crocodiles we made it. When we got to safety we looked around because it was nightfall. We found a shady tree to sleep under and fell asleep.

Next we decided to go to Kenya. We followed another group of people going there. There was another refugee camp in Kenya. It took us a year and a half to get there.

When we arrived at the next refugee camp, Amma and I were 20, Ajah was 16 and I was 19. We were put with a foster mother named Kya. She promised us she would never force us to marry us to anyone. We learned English and how to read and write.

After about a month of being at the camp, Kya had saved up some money and bought us matching bracelets and necklaces. "Now I will always be able to find you," said Kya.

"And now we will always be able to find each other," said I. When we had been at the camp for two years, they announced that they were picking people to go to America. We all filled out the paperwork to be one of the lucky few to go to America. "I hope we get picked," said Amma.

"But what if we get separated?" said Ajah.

"Then we might not be able to find each other," said Akua.

"Don't think that way. We'll always be able to find each other, we have our necklaces and bracelets. We will always be able to find each other with these," said I. We waited many months. Amma and Akua checked the board daily to see if we got put on the list. Every time they posted a new list we got our hopes up.

"It's useless, we'll never get picked," said Amma.

"They will never pick any girls, they haven't yet," said Akua.

"Don't give up hope," I said.

"We might be the first girls they ever pick," said Ajah.

Then a month later they made a new list. Amma and Akua ran to read it. They ran back to the hut as fast as they could. "OH MY GOSH! IT HAPPENED! IT FINALLY HAPPENED!" said Akua louder than ever.

"YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! I AND AJAH WERE RIGHT! ALL WE HAD TO DO WAS WAIT AND BE PATIENT!" said Amma.

"Let's go wake them up," said Akua. We ran upstairs and shook them awake.

"What do you two want?" said Ajah.

"Let me sleep," I said.

“NO! WE GOT PICKED!” said Amma and Akua at the same time.

“WE’RE GOING TO AMERICA?” Ajah yelled.

“Ya are we?” said I.

“Yup,” said Amma.

Then Akua and Ajah started jumping up and down and yelling “WE MADE IT! WE MADE IT! WE MADE IT! WE MADE IT! WE MADE IT!”

We packed up all of our stuff. It was hard for Amma to say goodbye to Kya because they had gotten really close over the two and a half years they had been at the camp. “Thank you for everything, Kya. I’ll miss you,” said Amma hugging Kya goodbye.

Kya handed her a note and whispered, “Read it when you miss me.” Then we all went to the plane. We rode in a truck to the airport. Many forms had to be filled out. We had to have medical examinations. We were given new clothes. Once we were ok to get on the plane, we waved Kya goodbye. It took 3 planes to get to our new home which was in New York City.

When we got there we found out that we were going to be living together. We got jobs, went to school, and found out that the person we were living with was rich and knew Kya. We had a happy life and later moved out and got our own house. We were happy in America.

## Sudan Tales: David’s Story

### Travelle and Giovanni

David comes home after a long day of school and doing chores. to rest. Then he hears a loud boom, then gunshots. The family panics and leaves with as much as they can carry. Bread, blankets, pillow, yams, potatoes, vegetables, legumes (beans, lentil, peanuts), meat (goat, mutton, chicken and fish near the rivers and lakes), okra and fruit as well.

As the family runs out of their home they hear more gunshots. Then they turn to look back and they see that their village is on fire. They cry as they run further from their home.

They go into the African bush to seek shelter but all they see is rocks and bushes. It will take them a long time to make it to the Nile river. They take weeks, and when night comes around they make a fire to warm up. Because of the cold weather they have to make food. Once they’ve made the food and have eaten they go to sleep.

They wake up in the morning to have breakfast, which is yams and bread. After they have breakfast they check their supplies to see what they have. They have everything so then they set off.

They walk across the Savannah for weeks and run out of food. They reach the Nile River and cross it on some other people’s boats.

They see the desert. They walk and walk on the hot rocks. The feet of the family feel like they are standing on a piece of hot metal. They encounter a shooter that takes all their food and some supplies. They go hungry that night and cold because they have to share a blanket.

They get up the next morning to see that there is a sand storm. They try to seek shelter before they get swept up in the storm. They walk to find nothing. They huddle together and close their eyes and wait for the sand storm to end.

They get to the Ethiopian refugee camp. David and his family go to the food hall and get food. Later David explores the camp. Six years later David is fifteen years old.

When David was 15 years old, soldiers chased David and his family to the Gilo river. After they had run off, they sought to travel to their destination. But as they soon realized, this was not going to be easy. Then out of nowhere David was hit in the shoulder. He fell back in agony screaming, "I'm in pain, I'm in pain!"

Two years later after the complication at the Gilo river we find Dave at the gates of the Kenyan Refugee Camp, ready to give in and finally be able to relax. But with everything that is on his mind it's a little hard for them all.

David woke up in the medical tent and asked the nurse, "How long have I been asleep?" "A week and 12 hours," said the nurse.

David dashed off from his bed and began to go to be with his family who were in the far end of the camp. His family tells him that a list of participants will be posted and if your name is up, you will be interviewed to go live in the United States.

Good news. David learned from the camp directors that his name was on the list. He smiled with glee, but then asked, "What about my brothers and sister?"

"Unfortunately none of their names were on the list," said the director. "Then I will not go either," said David.

But then one of his brothers came up behind him and said, "Go brother, start a new and better life we will be fine." They both shed a tear and gave each other a hug as David headed off to be interviewed.

Nine years later David is 24 and has a successful life, job, and has his own family. As David sits down in the chair of his 500,000 dollar house he reflects how none of this would ever have happened if he wasn't encouraged by his younger brother.

Then out of nowhere David's son Bol, named after the brother who encouraged him comes and sits on his lap. As David looks at him he sheds a tear. "Daddy, why are you crying?" says Bol.

"It's just that you remind me of my brother, your uncle," said David. Then they hugged each other tightly.

# Stop the Hate Essays by 7th Grade Writers

The Hate Way is Never the Right Way  
Destiny P.

“At least I can fit in a desk unlike you!” said Lucas.

“At least I don’t have an IEP,” said Madison

It was November 2021. We had just left music because that was our special. We were walking to class when all of a sudden the line just stopped moving. I heard yelling from this black girl named Madison and this white boy named Lucas. I only heard a few of their words clearly, but the words I heard were very hurtful. “Why does your face look like that?” said Lucas.

I just stood and listened because I didn’t want to get involved. Madison was my friend. She and Lucas had argued plenty of times before, but this one was the worst one.

Madison got real quiet and balled up her fist. “What you gonna do scary cat?” said Lucas.

Madison punched Lucas in the face. There was blood all over. Then a teacher came and pulled Madison into her office.

I felt so guilty for not trying to stop the situation, but at the same time I didn’t want to get in trouble. I was in the fifth grade so it was kind of a terrorizing moment. I feel as if he shouldn’t have said anything to her because then none of this would have happened even though they both were wrong. Just because y’all are different sizes you have to mess with her? Just because he has an IEP you have to mess with him?

After the whole situation was over I checked to make sure Madison was ok because she had been getting bullied her whole life. She told me, “I hate myself, I wish I was never born.”

I don’t think that she should have teased him because he has a learning problem. I was thinking, was this really just to bully her or could it have been because of the color of our skin? I will never know. Everybody stood there because they felt that it had nothing to do with them.

This story is really important to me because it taught me to always at least try to stand up for people and especially for myself. I was scared because I thought that I was the next target. Was this all really just a random thing? Or was this really just about her size? If I was to help would that make the situation worse or better?

From now on I will stand up to bullies. I will to no longer let hate go around. This is the end of it. I am here to make a change. STOP THE HATE.

## An Agent of Change Giovanni H.

“Check out Lil Bill,” they said, “If he was a rapper, he’d be called Lil darki.” Those were the words that they called me when I was younger.

It was my first day of 2nd grade. I didn't really fit in, and I was barely myself. I didn't know who I was. I felt like a stranger.

I think I was targeted because I was new or because of my skin. I fell into a deep state of something people call being self conscious. I started to doubt myself and believe everything they were saying. I went home crying that night. While I was dreaming I heard a voice, a strange and unfamiliar voice. The voice called itself encouragement. “You have the power, the ability to fight back” said the voice.

The next day I felt better but when I thought it was over it started right back up. This time, I started to see things differently and recognize the bullies' flaws. I saw everything that could be made fun of, and I took advantage of that moment. I prepared to shoot an insult back, but then I realized—what makes me better than them if I become just like them? So instead, I just ignored them, and now I have bullet proof skin.

From this, I gained a confidence boost which acts as a type of shield, but no shield is indestructible, which I had to find out the hard way many times. Imagine your confidence as a wall, but stress as a drill. Every time I get over-stressed, I become vulnerable, so vulnerable that my body won't even allow me to cry. I reject crying because I look at it as a weakness.

“Are you gay?” said my father. This was a second experience that challenged my shield. I told him what he wanted to hear and not how I really felt. Being asked that question, I felt the same as on my first day of second grade. Because of this second challenge, I'm now the most vulnerable person on the earth.

What will I do to change things? What will I do? I'm not sure if I can. Every time I try to seal the wall back up, someone just makes a bigger crack. There've been so many cracks that I've just stopped trying to seal them up. As a peer mediator, I am really an agent of change. We stop conflict before it actually happens. In the future, I will use my words against these types of acts of colorism and homophobia so people who are saying these types of words realize what they are doing.



## Hateful behavior at the Register Dominic H.

In 2021 at Walmart, a man was at the register trying to flirt with the cashier. The woman cashier told the man that she was gay and that she had a girlfriend. The man became silent for a second. The lady got done with scanning his food and told him the total, and the man had pulled out his money ready to pay, but he then said something under his breath.

The lady heard it, but she didn't hear it clearly. She asked him, "What did you say sir?"

He responded with what he said. He said "Gay slut."

She said, "I'm not a gay slut. I'm just a girl that has a right to be whatever sexuality I want to be, and you should watch what you say to people," she said.

Then he responded, "And I have a right to think what the f\*\*k I want. I have an opinion and a mouth for a f\*\*\*ing reason."

She said, "Yeah you can have an opinion, but you are being homophobic and not thinking about how your words can make me feel." Then some people finally stepped in and said something.

Two tall men said something, one said "Aye man you should leave." The other man said, "Man don't talk to her like that."

It looked like both of them were getting mad. A woman said, "This is crazy, why do he care so much that she is gay?" I started to look her up and down to see if I could picture her out. I looked at her nametag. I then looked at her face, and I saw that a tear had dropped from her face. Then another fell after another.

My brother said, "Get out of here with that. People have to pay for their stuff and have places to go." The man responded back with, "Y'all can shut the f\*\*\* up." My brother and the two males started to move him out the way.

Me and this other woman went to go get security. The security said, "Come on man, you have to go. You leave on your own or get thrown out."

The man said, "Don't touch me. I'll spit on you." The man ended up walking out.

As I was just standing there watching him leave I was thinking to myself why would he say that, will I be in a similar situation like this? Will I be the bad or good person in the story?

What I think of this situation is that it's sad that people have to go through this. What I learned from this situation is that I shouldn't do this nor should anyone else. I think that we can make this stop. Some ideas are that we throw LGBTQ protests, have small meetups and talk about it. We can try to tell people if they have a rude opinion on someone, keep it to yourself.

## My Mom Had the Courage Travelle B.

We just got finished from going downtown to shop. We were at the bus stop. We had just got on the bus. 10 stops later My mom, me, and my sis are in our seats. It was late evening and we were almost home. We came to this bus stop. I thought that we would just go by it and go on but we did not. There is this lady at this bus stop. She had a baby in the stroller, and she tried to get on the bus, but the driver wouldn't let her on the bus. my thought was what was stopping her. My mom tried to tell the bus driver to let her on. He just left her there after a minute.

I think that the woman felt confused because the stroller got stuck in the doorway. She kept pushing the stroller; she then felt angry that he wouldn't open them further. Then really angry after he left her at the bus stop. I feel like the reason this story is important to me is because I feel bad that I didn't do anything and sat in my seat quietly. I think the people on the bus felt bad for the woman. I think most of the people forgot about it to this day. This kind of hate was an injustice.

In the future, I would stand up and try to help her get on the bus. Now, I try to stand up to bullying. I did not do much but my mom had courage.

## I Hate "You People"

Najah S.

"I hate you people," said my grandfather as he was shouting at the computer screen. I'm in disbelief as my granddad is speaking what pops up in his mind. We are watching this video of this man giving to the world and expressing his mind, trying to fill our thoughts with God. People are walking by being hateful because of what this man is saying. My granddad is acting out of rage because of how people are treating this speaker. How can people be so rude?

I stood there in silence, words and thoughts filling my mind with questions. Are we causing hate too? My mind is rumbling with nothing but why. "Why do people not want to listen to this speaker?" Is it because the things that he is saying are true? "Grand-dad, why are you being so negative?" This man of color is being treated so poorly and is still being so positive. My granddad despises the people that hate this powerful speaker. Should he help or should he be hateful as well?

He has chosen hate. I now feel stale; I always go on and on to people about how my family never spread hate. He just proved me wrong! I have learned that trying to stop hate can make the problem bigger than how it started. "Will this ever affect me?" I ask myself. This can result in the loss of my grandfather. It is not right for people to be that hateful for just telling the truth and trying to help. This issue is so important because I now realize why certain people are being targeted and mistreated. It makes me look back at history and how history repeated itself. Some people don't even know why they hate them because they think it's cool or they're just too ignorant to see the true picture. I want other people, especially the younger audience, to know that it is not ok to spread hate, and even if you were taught these things, you can still stand up to things and people you love. There will always be someone on your side. You just have to find them.

You can find your escape, start a program, make a page, or even just spread the word. I am going to gather individuals that are with me and make a change. We will host events and try to get bullies and people that discriminate to understand that these things are not ok and how it would be if they were hated on. My mother always told me that bullied kids bully kids and sometimes we don't realize it. We can be one of the most hateful people in someone's life just because we want to be funny or impress someone. Things like this can be so hurtful as asking about an imperfection. We are one, we are whole, we are powerful. Use your power and knowledge to do something. Stop the hate!