

**Title: The C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project: A Case Study in Replacing Trauma and Violence with Youth Directed Compassion, Respect, Inspiration, Motivation, and Empathy**

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## Abstract

The C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project (*Compassion, Respect, Inspiration, Motivation, Empathy*) is a grassroots, youth led violence prevention program. Since its inception in 2009, the C.R.I.M.E. Teens have worked toward multiple achievements, most notably presenting to hundreds of elementary, middle school, and professional populations through an adolescent-centric perspective of community, school, relational, and familial violence, and authoring and publishing a book targeted to educators and direct service professionals on how to better understand the youth experience of violence. This paper is a written collaboration between the C.R.I.M.E. youth workers and the adult supporters that explores a case study of the model of the C.R.I.M.E. Teens program, and the critical issues of violence against girls and young women, particularly focusing on cyber bullying, relational violence, and teen dating relationships. The C.R.I.M.E. Teens also provide personal narratives of their own experience with these forms of violence as well as their personal experiences as C.R.I.M.E. youth program leaders. In the words of one of our youth, “the violence rate toward and between women is increasing in Chicago neighborhoods. We have all witnessed violence in our own ways. We want to talk about how we experienced violence and what we have learned from it. We are a group of teens trying to stop violence and help communities come together as one. As youth, people think just because we are teens, we don’t really CARE, but we do; we want to use our voice to help make change.”

## The C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project: A Case Study in Replacing Trauma and Violence with Youth Directed Compassion, Respect, Inspiration, Motivation, and Empathy

### **Introduction: A History of the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Program Development**

We, the teen leaders and adult supporters, represent the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project<sup>1</sup> (*Compassion, Respect, Inspiration, Motivation, Empathy*), a youth-led violence prevention program ([www.crimeteens.com](http://www.crimeteens.com)). Located in the Chicago neighborhood of Bronzeville, our program is comprised of ten youth who have come together to work as program leaders in developing curriculum and presentations about topics that the youth identify as vital areas of discussion in the field of violence prevention. Our program, funded by the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority Fund (IVPA)<sup>2</sup>, was conceptualized as a youth-led model with a philosophy to develop youth empowerment and social action as a method to engage disadvantaged and at risk teen participants in various program opportunities.

The philosophy behind the youth-led model is to engage teens that are otherwise significantly constrained or oppressed, whether by their familial, financial, educational, or institutional situations, in proactive organizations as both a method to provide protective factors for these youth and as a way to assist in the development of pro-social skills. Developing C.R.I.M.E. Teens as a youth led program has assisted in not only keeping youth safe and free from the streets but also helped develop a sense of investment, agency, and leadership in the teens. We continue to participate in the program because we are motivated to help our community, we view C.R.I.M.E. as a “second family,” and we want to develop ourselves as

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<sup>1</sup> The C.R.I.M.E. project has been funded by the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority from 2008-2011 and run the Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work, overseen by Principal Investigator, Dr. Katherine Tyson McCrea.

<sup>2</sup> The views and statements expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of IVPA.

youth leaders who exemplify qualities of compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy.

The context of the program's development was the Bronzeville community. This community is a high-risk, predominantly African-American area that is in the process of being improved, in part through the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation. However, some current concerns that we have include drug trafficking, sexual assault, gang violence, territory wars, poverty, and limited school resources. We, the youth, have shared and heard stories of trauma, and violence inflicted on youth, particularly the young women who we have worked with in the after school programming. We did not just want to speak about our experiences, but we wanted to find a way to express our frustrations, trauma, and fear through action-oriented projects. Our desire to find a method of purposeful learning through social action is what planted the seed for what would become the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project.

In 2009, Dr. Bulanda recruited us to write youth-led mini-grant through the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority because he recognized our desire to work for community change. Once we made the commitment to brainstorm different ways that violence could be minimized, we conceptualized a program and goals we wanted to achieve in starting our own organization. Within less than 30 minutes of receiving this opportunity, we decided that we wanted to take ownership of the word *CRIME*, replace the negative emotional charge behind the word and replace it with positive alternatives. This was how *CRIME* became less about the dangers and fears that teens faced, and more about learning how to use the traits of compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy to teach others in the hope to minimize relational, familial, and community violence.

After Dr. Bulanda recruited us, he then recruited a second adult supporter, Rachel Kibblesmith, his previous social work intern from Loyola University Chicago's School of Social Work MSW program (and now the current Project Director of C.R.I.M.E.). The role of the adult allies is to help us make sure the information we present is correct, to exhaust all possible resources and opportunities to C.R.I.M.E., to make contacts with other groups in the communities, to help us gain knowledge about the human service field, and to provide the basic necessities, such as transportation, worksite, and supplies.

We were able to recruit other C.R.I.M.E. Teens by talking to our friends and students at our schools about the C.R.I.M.E. Teen projects and bringing them to meetings. This was exciting for us because not only were we able to organize a group of teens who were passionate about working to end violence, but we also were able to train other teens on how to be youth leaders through the presentations and writing projects that we did for C.R.I.M.E.

The C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project has also gained many allies through our programming efforts. Loyola University Chicago's School of Social work is the primary partnership that the C.R.I.M.E. Teens organization utilizes. Other allies have essentially been "won over" by the C.R.I.M.E. Teens, through their presentations, marketing efforts, or personal connections. Some of our allies include: different elementary schools (Doolittle, Salazar, Donoghue, Reavis, Lincoln, Forest Road, Congress Park), churches (i.e., West Point Baptist Church), youth centers (i.e., Chicago Youth Centers), community organizing groups (Project NIA, Centers for New Horizons), and universities (i.e. Roosevelt University, Aurora University, University of Illinois-Chicago, University of Chicago).

Each year that our organization has been implemented, there have consistently been two major objectives structured into the program. The first objective is to be heard by mass audiences through our writing projects. The second objective is to mentor and teach children, adults, and other adolescents through public presentations. Currently, we have authored two books: one is a psycho-educational piece for adults working with teens on how to more deeply understand an adolescent's perspective of violence; the second is a children's book centered around bullying and how to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. Further, we are currently working on a book for teens on how to cope effectively with trauma. (See <http://www.crimeteens.com/crime-materials> for more information on these publications).

This paper intends to explore the *C.R.I.M.E. 101* presentation series that we developed. We wanted to reach an audience of other adolescents to discuss topics that we felt were risk factors. When we researched topics to develop our curriculum, we consistently found the issues of relational violence, cyber-bullying, and teen dating violence as significant issues in girls and young women. For the purpose of educating the readers of this paper, we have chosen to further explore these topics, share personal experiences that we have encountered with these forms of violence, and discuss our perspective on being part of a youth led program. Finally, we dedicate a section of this paper to advising how the victims, perpetrators, and bystanders to various forms of violence can respond to these actions with the C.R.I.M.E. core values of compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy.

### **Who We Are and the Problems We Are Addressing**

The name of our group is C.R.I.M.E. We are a youth-led group that talks about violence prevention. The acronym C.R.I.M.E. stands for Compassion, Respect, Inspiration, Motivation,

and Empathy. These words represent the qualities that we aim to teach others to inculcate in their hearts and everyday lives. As part of our mission to prevent all forms of violence, we educate teens about issues such as relational violence, cyber bullying, and dating violence. In this paper, we will: 1) explain the nature of the relational violence, cyber bullying, and dating violence; 2) talk about the C.R.I.M.E. approach to dealing with these issues; and 3) talk about how victims, perpetrators and bystanders can develop compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy.

## **Relational Violence**

### ***Personal Experience by Daria Siler, C.R.I.M.E. teen***

*My sophomore year in high school, I had a friend named Ashley<sup>3</sup>. Upon entering high school, most people made fun of her. They talked about the way she looked and no one was friends with her. I took the initiative to get to know her and found that she was really nice. However, sophomore year, someone had spread an extreme rumor around the school about her. They had told everyone she contracted an STD. This saddened my friend Ashley. In the halls, people would make fun of her acting in ways that expressed she was contagious. For about a month, she cried everyday. She went into a deep depression. Her friends, except for me, stopped hanging out with her due to the rumor. She started getting bad grades in school and eventually she dropped out. Currently, she is pursuing a GED.*

### ***Definition and the Nature of the Problem***

Relational aggression is defined as verbal bullying in the form of, “verbal harassment, spreading rumors, or social rejection and isolation ... relational aggression is often more

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<sup>3</sup> The identity of the individuals in the vignettes has been disguised so they are not identifiable.

common among girls,” (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011, p. 1). This form of aggression and bullying can be dangerous to girls in many ways. First, it can damage their self-esteem by feeling making them feel left out or isolated. Additionally, bullying through relational aggression can cause a number of, “behavioral, emotional, and physical adjustment problems,” such as, “depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and isolation, and poor school performance” (Hamburger et al., p. 1).

Relational bullying is a problem among many girls, especially as they reach adolescence. Some of the reasons that these problems can occur are because of how girls are socialized not to show direct aggression, intense emotions (such as jealousy and disappointment) that develop in friendships, cliques and the desire to be belong to a group, challenges with maintaining female friendships while pursuing dating relationships with boys, emerging feelings of competition for boys and within school, and issues of self-esteem (Ripley & O’Neil, 2009).

### ***Effects of Relational Violence***

The effects of relational violence may create difficulties in feeling accepted, being social, or feeling good about yourself. Many times, youth may not realize that they are being “aggressive” or a bully when they use forms of relational aggression. However, youth should know that if they are purposely isolating someone or gossiping about the other person, that this may be a form of violence. It can also have negative effects not just on the way that the bully chooses to relate to the victim, but how other bystanders may relate to the victim as well. By using techniques such as spreading rumors, one can create false beliefs about a person instantaneously, which can have extremely negative effects on a person’s sense of self.

Relational violence can also have long term effects on a person, as some studies have found that victims of bullying as young people have led to problems that continue into adulthood such as, “low self esteem and self worth, depression, antisocial behavior,” and other problems (CDC, 2011).

## **Cyber bullying**

### ***Personal Experience by LaTierra Wells, C.R.I.M.E. Teens***

*A time when I witnessed cyber bullying was when a friend of mine, Britney, posted a Facebook status talking about this one girl, Lilah. Britney was just saying a whole bunch of stuff about Lilah. Mind you Lilah did not have a Facebook so she would look on someone else’s page and see that Britney was talking about her. Britney would just put mean things about this girl on her status and say what’s she going to do to Lilah. Keep in mind that Lilah doesn’t bother anybody and tries to stay away from drama. The bully was so mean that she said she wanted Lilah to die. So when Lilah saw that, she was shocked and depressed and even thought about hurting herself. In my opinion I think the bully was just angry and she wanted some friends so she just picked on an easy target. Or maybe she just was lonely and needed a couple friends and she thought bullying someone would get her attention.*

### ***Definition and Nature of the Problem***

First, we are going to explain what cyber bullying is. Cyber bullying is the process of bullying over the internet or any electronic device. A formal definition is:

the use of information and communication technologies such as email, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory

online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviors by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others (Li, 2005, p. 1777).

So, basically, cyber bullying is when people make fun of, tease, or threaten others over the internet or through text messages. Ponsford (2007, p. 26) said there were five ways of attacking others through cyber bullying: “(1) exposure of confidential information or gossiping, (2) attacks on appearances, (3) attacks on sexuality, (4) statements about disloyalty or untrustworthiness, and (5) threats or desire for physical violence.” This might be by making mean Facebook statuses, writing negative things on someone’s Facebook page, or having a webpage that rates the prettiest or ugliest girls in a school. The teens who participate in this may spread rumors or reveal confidential information about a former friend. Cyber bullying may also be used to cause relationship problems by saying a girl is cheating on her boyfriend or saying that a girl’s boyfriend is cheating with another girl.

Cyber bullying is a problem that affects many adolescents; in fact Li (2006) says that one in four adolescents are cyber victims. Because it does not happen right in front of adults, it may not be seen as as big of a problem as it really is. Even though it may seem invisible to adults, the effects can be grave. The victim may be so humiliated that they may even kill themselves (Coloroso, 2006).

While cyber bullying is done by both males and females, we found that 60% of cyber victims are female (Li, 2006). It has been argued that females prefer cyber bullying to direct forms of violence (Li, 2006). Individuals who cyber bully may have lots of anger built up in them and use this method of bullying as a way of causing conflict and expressing that anger. That being said, it is our experience that cyber bullying is particularly dangerous because it could

lead to physical aggression. In our after school program, we experienced an incident when a teen posted a Facebook comment that led six other girls to “jump” her as she was leaving the program. Cyber bullying, therefore, can have both physical and emotional consequences.

## **Teen Dating Violence**

### ***Personal Experience by Kenyatti Hellum, C.R.I.M.E. Teen***

*Teen dating violence is becoming a bigger epidemic everyday, especially targeted at young female adolescents. As a teenager myself, I've experience it first hand. One night, I got into a disagreement with an ex-boyfriend that spurred out of control. We were originally trying to work things out but our problems only got worse as time went on. Next thing I know I was being choked against a gate. Once he choked me, I fell to the floor. I was in shock because I never expected it to happen so I guess that's why I didn't know how to handle it. I felt mad and even upset with myself because no action was really taken, but I knew all I could do and really wanted to do was take my experience and learn from it and try and prevent it for the next person. The person who hurt me they are now getting help for it and we still are friends. I just choose not to be alone with this person until I can maybe trust him again but I still forgave him and support him in getting help.*

### ***Definition and Nature of the Problem***

Teen dating violence is a problem many teen girls are experiencing today. This may not seem like it is affecting many teens, but this is because many teens hold a “code of silence.” In reality, when surveyed confidentially, “1 in 4 adolescents report verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year” (CDC, 2010a, p. 1). Another statistic was that “about 10% of students nationwide report being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 12 months” (CDC, 2010a, p. 1). Further 2009 YRBSS data shows the problem is higher

in Chicago with about 18.5% of teens reporting being physically hurt (CDC, 2010b). These statistics show that this is definitely a problem.

Dating violence has a very negative effect on victims. Some victims may no longer know how to have healthy relationships. Some victims may also overall just avoid relationships. It can sometimes even lead to death: homicide, or sometime even suicide. Dating violence can lead to depression, which could cause bad grades and unhealthy behaviors like drug or alcohol abuse.

## **The C.R.I.M.E. Approach to Relational Violence, Cyber bullying, & Dating Violence**

### ***Our Beliefs about Teens***

We feel that adolescents are often perceived by adults as less knowledgeable, uneducated, and unaware of our feelings. We as C.R.I.M.E. Teens believe however that youth are insightful about ourselves, others, and serious issues in the community. We think the most appealing thing to audiences that we have presented to is our philosophy of “youth teaching others.” We felt that if we could be the leaders and teachers of our program that we could make a bigger difference.

Taking the leadership role and teaching adults and other youth about how to be leaders in areas of Compassion, Respect, Inspiration, Motivation, and Empathy has given us the opportunity to decide what we want to do for our program. So for example, when we wanted to make presentations to younger kids, we were able to draw from our own experiences and think about topics that were important to us when we were younger. We then worked together to research these topics, and come up with ways that would make our presentations more fun and interesting. Working together on as youth leaders makes the C.R.I.M.E. Teens project more interesting because we get to research and talk about subjects that we are passionate about.

Another important part of our program is our ability to recognize the strengths that our members have and also the challenges. By learning how to give constructive feedback to each other and also learn from one another's talents, we have been able to form a supportive environment for learning and leadership. One of the ways that we are able to recognize each other's strengths is through working on projects as a team, but assigning specific tasks to team members who have an interest or passion for that area.

For example, our team members that excel in writing volunteer to research and develop the curriculum, while teens that love to speak publicly will often primarily travel to presentations and conferences. By developing our program with the mission to engage each other in our specific passions, we have been more engaged, our attendance has been higher, and we have built greater support for one another.

Though building on youth strengths is part of the focus of the C.R.I.M.E. Project's philosophy, we also expect that youth who have strengths in specific content areas will assist with the facilitation and development of these skills in youth leaders who find certain areas more challenging.

Teaching skills to each other within our program has been a way to increase the level of communication and support for each other. As an example, one of the C.R.I.M.E. Teens stated when asked by a community organizer what their favorite part of being a C.R.I.M.E. Teen was, "I like when we all work together because we know how to support each other. Like if I am speaking, and someone asks me a question and I don't know the answer, I know that one of my fellow workers will jump in to help me." This sense of partnership and leadership has assisted us in feeling a greater sense of empowerment and also feeling as if there are adult allies who view

us as competent and capable leaders. It also has helped us as adolescents to facilitate a pro-social culture of compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy between teen participants.

### ***The C.R.I.M.E. 101 Presentations***

As we started to develop our C.R.I.M.E. 101 presentations, we used different ways to research topics that were important to educate other teens on. Some of the ways that we brainstormed the topics that were necessary were through: talking with our other members about areas of violence in their lives, talking with adult allies, and drawing from our own life experiences. What we found was that every single one of us as C.R.I.M.E. Teens and many of our friends have been exposed to relational bullying, dating violence, and/or cyber bullying. Due to the prevalence of these topics in teen culture, C.R.I.M.E. felt that these were important subjects to be developed into our presentation curriculum. The C.R.I.M.E. teens help by teaching adolescents about these issues and how to recognize them. In doing so, we make presentations to after school programs, at youth summits, and schools to a wide range of adolescents. C.R.I.M.E. 101 covers five main topics: self-esteem/suicide prevention, gang involvement, dating violence, cyber bullying, and anger management. Throughout these presentations, we encourage teens to seek help if they are having these troubles and to “say it out loud” instead of holding their problems inside. This is in line with the mission Illinois Department of Human Services’ “Say It Out Loud” campaign ([www.mentalhealthillinois.org](http://www.mentalhealthillinois.org)).

We work to make the presentations to other teens as informative and interesting as possible. Each presentation lasts about one hour. In that hour, we generally have a lecture that talks about the problem, the effects, and tips on how to deal with it. (See Table 1 for an example of our cyber bullying presentation). Then, we lead a discussion with the teens and ask them about their experiences with the issue and try to support them in making good choices.

Sometimes, we will include an activity, such as a role-play. We will use statistics to help get the teens' attention on a certain matter and also use relevant news articles, pertaining to the topic. Using news articles about celebrities (such as Chris Brown) can help get teens talking about the issue and showing news articles about "regular" teens can show the consequences of bullying and dating violence. Finally, we pass out an informational brochure that we created as well as a stress ball and other resources (such as abuse and suicide prevention hotlines).

One of the ways that we feel that we have been effective in our presentation is by asking the audience members for feedback. Many times, we feel that the teens are more comfortable opening up to us about their stories surrounding these issues because we are also teens. We as C.R.I.M.E. Teens have also become comfortable with sharing some of our own personal narratives to show other teens that you can go through hardships, but can also be supported and help others as well.

Feedback we have received from our audiences is often very positive and many teens ask us a lot of questions about the information we present. We have also gotten strong feedback from adults such as teachers who watch our presentations who often state that they have even learned something. Although this is very good feedback, and we are proud of the response we have gotten from the audiences, we also want to make sure that we are making a difference and have been continuing to work with our adult supporters on developing specific ways to learn and understand the impact of our curriculum and its effect on our audiences. One of the ways that we have begun this process is by using our *Say It Out Loud* grant to develop a trauma survey that we will be giving to many teens to help us better understand the context of trauma, what subjects or topics are prevalent in teens' lives, and what teens know about trauma, versus what they do

not so that we can research the missing pieces and form our presentations around areas in which teens need more information and education.

**TABLE 1: CYBER BULLYING PRESENTATION FROM C.R.I.M.E. 101 CURRICULUM**

*In 2007 a 13-year-old girl from St. Louis named Megan Meier hung herself after a former friend's mother/neighbor posed as a boyfriend on My Space and sent cruel messages.*

***Cyber Bullying: What is it?***

*Everyday you're faced with the image of wanting to be popular. If you don't fit into a certain category, you can be severely harassed and/or embarrassed. There are ways to get out of being bullied such as reporting or ignoring the bully. But how do you ignore something that now follows you home? How should be a safe haven, a place where you let go of your issues you may have outside of your home. Now, you can be constantly reminded of how ugly, stupid, fat, skinny, you are. How is this possible, the bully is nowhere near you? Cyber Bullying is a form of bullying that is done through electronic devices such as cell phones and over the computer. Cyber Bullying occurs over websites such as Facebook and My Space, emails, Im's, and through text messages. Cyber Bullying includes things like posting lies, mean rumors, and threatening messages for others to see.*

*Cyber Bullying doesn't have to be in your face all the time. Just because a name is not stated does not mean that it isn't cyber bullying. Even posting statuses about others is a form of cyber bullying. This would be called **indirect** cyber bullying. In a way, this may attack more than one person because it doesn't target a specific person, rather it can really go to anyone who thinks it may apply. I can post a status saying, "He/She is stupid and I hate them," and this can go one of two ways. The people who read it could take offense to it and think it's about them or others can join in, agree, or "LIKE" the status. By doing this, they are talking about the same person or someone in their life who they think is stupid or they may hate.*

***Cyber Bullying Statistics***

*32% of teens reported being victims of cyber bullying*

*15% of teens reported private messages (email, text, IM) sent to others without permission*

*13% received threatening messages*

*13% have had rumors spread online about them*

*6% have had an embarrassing picture posted online without their permission*

***Results of Cyber Bullying: Why is it a problem? How big of a problem is it?***

*Cyber bullying has the potential to be worse than bullying face to face, at school, or in other public places. In those cases there is a much smaller audience. The Internet, however, is worldwide. With thousands of people watching, the victim may feel alone and have nowhere to turn. Victims of cyber bullying often feel emotions such as anger, embarrassment, fear, and so on. Some victims of cyber bullying have a drop in their grades, low self-esteem, depression, or drug abuse. Megan Gillan, a 15-year-old girl of Macclesfield, Cheshire, and swallowed painkillers to avoid a science exam after classmates posted vicious messages on the social networking site. She was found dead the next morning. Not only will victims of cyber bullying try to hurt themselves, but they may also try to hurt others around them. They might pick fights, terrorize their neighborhood, and/or school and even commit homicides. These are some cases where cyber bullying can affect other people due to the victims' emotional or social issues.*

***Who does it? Why do they do it?***

*Anyone can be a cyber bully, a teen, adult, co-worker, etc. Although both males and females cyber bully, more females have been reported as cyber bullies than males. Most girls who cyber bully are popular,*

usually bully in a group, does well in school, are well liked by adults, and may tease their peers about things like their hair, weight, intelligence or athletic ability. Most people who cyber bully often do it for laughs, so attention will not be directed towards them, and other various reasons such as low self esteem, anger, hate, and some may think it's just harmless.

### **Consequences**

Although the numbers are very low for cyber bullying, government officials in some states won't stand for it and have given schools permission to suspend, expel, and punish the student(s) under their own discretion. If cyber bullying leads to suicides and homicides or it is taken to the point where lives are threatened, the bullies can spend time in jail depending on the case. For example there was a case involving an individual named Keeley Houghton who received 3 months for threatening a girl on Facebook but the consequences could be even more significant.

### **Tips to Prevent Cyber Bullying**

There are a few things a person can do to prevent cyber bullying:

1. Speak up and let cyber bullies know what they are doing is wrong
2. Depending on the severity when being bullied, just ignore it; this shows the bully whatever they are saying really doesn't matter to you
3. If you know someone who is a cyber bully, encourage them to be kind to others instead of making fun of them
4. Tell a responsible adult (parent, teacher, police, etc.) whom you trust about the bullying
5. Stay cautious of your own posts, or who you may accept as a friend
6. Block or delete cyber bullies from your page and take advantage of privacy settings
7. Don't give out personal information such as phone numbers, passwords, or other contact information to people you don't socialize with or feel could be bullies
8. Just as parents told you when you were little, **DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS**

### **Tips for Parents**

1. Teach kids peaceful ways to solve their problems other than bullying
2. Be a part of your child's life
3. Know their friendship circles, create one with their parents
4. Check their computer and Internet use, know what site they are on
5. Put computer in a public area of the house

### **Conclusion**

"The Internet is a tool that has to be used properly, you know it's like a knife. It's very helpful but it can also cut you," Julie an Internet victim

Watch what you post and say on the Internet it might be offensive to others. Thank you for listening to what I had to say and now that you know about cyber bullying maybe you can help prevent cyber bullying in your neighborhood or in your school.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Who has a social networking page (Facebook, My Space, etc)
- What do you do on your page?
- Have you been a victim of cyber bullying?
- What happened? How did it feel?
- How did you resolve the issue?
- Have you ever cyber bullied?
- Why did you do it?
- Were there any consequences?

## **C.R.I.M.E. 101: Lessons Learned by Youth Participants**

While it is very important for us as youth to try to teach audiences topics regarding relational aggression, cyber bullying and teen dating violence, we also have the goal of learning more about these issues and about ourselves. We asked some of our C.R.I.M.E. Teen youth leaders what they have learned through being a part of the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project, and how they plan to continue to move forward toward helping others achieve compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy. The following are testimonials from some of our members.

### Interview with Kenyatti Hellum

*What Lessons have you learned?*

While giving my C.R.I.M.E. 101 speeches I have learned different things. One important thing I learned is to be very interactive and communicate with people I am talking to. I realized that it is not so much the speech and lesson on the piece of paper to be read that is important, it is also the conversation with the audience on certain topics, especially ones where we find that some audience members have had very personal experiences with the topics that we are talking about.

*What have been your successes and how do you define success?*

I have had several successes due to being a member of C.R.I.M.E. A big one I can say is seeing the efforts that I have put forward doing things like giving speeches and presentations. Knowing that I made a difference in someone's life is one of the greatest successes I can contribute.

*What have been the barriers that you encountered and how did you overcome them?*

With all my successes, I have also experienced difficult obstacles throughout my experience presenting the C.R.I.M.E. 101 curriculum. I remember sometimes trying hard to get a message to the audience that we have researched and written while still keeping the audience tuned in. What I have learned as a youth presenter is how to think of something to pull the audience's attention back. Most of the time the skill I use is presenting my enthusiasm to keep everyone's energy up.

There have also been things that have surprised me working in the C.R.I.M.E. program and interacting with adolescent audiences. One of the things that has surprised me is the hard questions I would have to answer once we were done presenting. Because some audience members would ask things that I didn't know, I have been surprised by trying to figure out how to answer questions on the spot that I did not feel prepared for.

*What do you wish you had known before you started?*

There were also things I wish I had known before I began participating in the C.R.I.M.E. program. One thing I did not realize and wish I would have known is how much growth I would have to do and how much I would have to learn about having the values that a C.R.I.M.E. member needs to do their job such as compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy

### Interview with Daria Siler

*What lessons have you learned?*

I did not expect to have so many memorable experiences with C.R.I.M.E. Early on in life I did not really work well with children and I was not a good public speaker. C.R.I.M.E. pushed me to just go at it and try hard at the same time. Although this was intimidating at first, I learned that surprisingly, it was like second nature for me to work with children and speak in public.

*What have been your successes and how do you define success?*

My greatest success has been eliminating my fear of public speaking. This has helped me to eliminate this fear in other areas of my life and it has created much more success in other areas in my educational career.

*What have been the barriers that you encountered and how did you overcome them?*

The biggest barrier was overcoming the ability to speak to large audiences and present, but I found that this was something that with the experience, I felt very natural doing.

*What was unexpected or a surprise?*

The biggest surprise to me was embarking on my own life journey. Now I am a senior who will be graduating high school and moving on to college. C.R.I.M.E. has helped me want to teach children the real world experiences that go on in teens' lives. I also want to use my knowledge to continue to educate others in my age group about what is going on with women and violence on a large scale.

*What do you wish you had known before you started?*

Before beginning my C.R.I.M.E. journey, I wish that I would have known how to be more time efficient, so that I could work on the big projects that we had better. I also wish that I had been more knowledgeable about current events ~~in~~—so when I presented the C.R.I.M.E. 101 material I could connect the things that I teach to the children to real world experiences

Interview with Tevin Ratcliff

*What lessons have you learned?*

Something I learned from the C.R.I.M.E. program is that even if the people you are presenting to are not participating, you have to find some things they like in order to catch their

attention. This has helped me become a better speaker by being more aware of how to interact with the audience more.

*What have been your successes and how do you define success?*

One thing that I have succeeded in as a C.R.I.M.E. member is that I tend to be the teen presenter who gets the crowd pumped up so that they can *participate*. In C.R.I.M.E. we are very active teens, and expect the adolescents that we present to, to be very active as well. I define success as the ability to do something or accomplish something. Most of the time when we first come to present, it seems like our audience is thinking, “What are they doing here?” and it makes me feel like they might not care that we are there and about what we have to say. When I am able to engage an audience and teach them how to live their lives with less violence, it feels like a success.

*What have been the barriers that you encountered, and how did you overcome them?*

As I talked about before, sometimes it is hard to get the crowd involved, especially when they are adolescents talking about hard stuff. We overcame these problems by getting to know the crowd a little better, by talking to them before the presentation and asking a lot of questions to get them involved more. We also found that when we have presented C.R.I.M.E. 101 in schools, the teachers and classroom volunteers have been excited to help us and they ended up sharing their own experiences with the C.R.I.M.E. presenters.

*What was unexpected or a surprise?*

Something that was unexpected was learning how to think about what we wanted our outcome to be of our presentations. I am always surprised when we are presenting and trying to get the information to the crowd and they understand what we are talking about and tell us that they will take the lessons with them. I know that we have accomplished the goal of teaching

other kids about violence prevention when the audience members will either ask a lot of questions during the presentation, or come up to us and ask if they could join, help, or tell us what a good job we did.

*What do you wish you had known before you started?*

I do not wish I had known anything before I started C.R.I.M.E. because I like everything to be a surprise, (Author, Tevin Ratcliff, Freshman).

### **C.R.I.M.E. Teens and Violence Against Young Girls and Women: What We Learned:**

In writing this paper, we have also learned a great deal about the violence against girls and women that occurs. While our C.R.I.M.E. 101 curriculum is intended for all audiences, it was startling for us when we started our research to see that in all the topic areas we wanted to cover, there were startling rates of violence against girls and young women. This as C.R.I.M.E. Teen youth women leaders made us want to continue to become more educated on issues facing young girls today, and to also start to look more closely at how we could use our leadership and our strength that we believe we have as young women to help assist other teens in need.

### **Starting from the Ground Up: What Youth and Adults Need to Know**

Something that we would share with a group that is trying to do a similar project is that first you have to find people who will get together and do the work. Then you have to get some information that people can relate to. This is how we started researching and writing our C.R.I.M.E. 101 curriculum; we knew it was a big deal to kids and adolescents and wanted to find information that would be interesting to them and to us.

After you figure out what message or topics you want to talk and write about, you need to look at other groups and research what kind of speeches and presentations they give and see if you can do better. Finally, it is helpful to first present your ideas about starting your program and the goals that you want to accomplish to people you know so that you can get all of your ideas organized before starting to go out to the community and work with younger kids.

Something that we want people to know is that C.R.I.M.E. is not a game. We are talking to people about how they are feeling about very serious issues. We want people to know how much we care, and we also want them to feel comfortable sharing with us and to learn something!

### **Now What?**

In this section, we want to look at the three people who might be involved in a bullying or teen dating violence situation: the bully (or perpetrator), the bullied, and the bystander (Coloroso, 2006) and how they can use the C.R.I.M.E. principles to lead healthy and safe lives.

### ***The Victim and the Principles of “C.R.I.M.E.”***

If a young girl or woman is being victimized, our first hope would be that she would be able to find a safe and trusting place to go. We believe that the first thing that a woman needs after being victimized by violence is compassion. This can be found in a number of ways. First, we need those who are in power and have the power to protect young girls from violence to show compassion to them by providing them with safe resources, information on how to find help, and follow up on their needs. This level of care will also help the victim show compassion for herself because she can feel that she is cared for and safe and that there are people who are present to help and not hurt her. This is important because sometimes, when girls are being

bullied or abused, they might think they deserve it or they believe the awful thing that the perpetrator says to them. This might be for a number of reasons: they might not have had good examples of healthy love; they might depend on the perpetrator for things they need; they might not have many friends or people who care for them; or, they might just be scared and unable to stand up to the perpetrator who is inflicting abuse. This is why young girls and women who experience violence should always be shown compassion and in turn also be helped to understand how to have compassion for themselves.

Another important way to show respect for yourself and others is to never be violent or look for revenge unless you have to defend yourself. If you have a run-in with a cyber bully, find another way to react to the situation rather than retaliation. There are very serious consequences for cyber bullying, and there is more respect in reporting incidents of cyber bullying and/or moving forward without reciprocating hate. If the other person is a cyber bully, she is making herself look bad by wasting her time gossiping about others, so why should the victim put herself down to the bully's level? Revenge never works in the end because the other person will try to get back at you. Or even if the bully does not come back after the victim, the victim may feel guilty about hurting the bully (either through words or physically).

However, we know that cyber bullying and dating violence can be tough to ignore. So, the most important way for a victim to show respect for herself is to say it out loud! She needs to tell someone that can help her with the situation and protect her if her safety is in danger. She may also need someone to help her with her hurt feelings especially if a group of students are teasing her about rumors or if her dating partner has really put her down. The best way for a victim to take care of herself is to find help from a caring friend, family member, and/or other adult in her life.

Finally, we recommend that the victim try to show compassion and empathy for the bully or perpetrator. *While it is important to have empathy for the perpetrator, the victim should never put her safety at risk by staying around anyone who bullies or hurts her.* Further, the victim's first priority to seek out help to make sure she has fully processed the situation and healed herself. At an appropriate time, the victim may reflect on why the perpetrator is violent or a bully. People who are perpetrators of violence often need their own level of help and assistance, which communities should recognize and work together to change. For example, if there is a chronic issue with relational violence and cyber bullying at a school, it would be important to show empathy for victims by working on a larger scale to create programs or initiatives that help to protect people from violence. Additionally, if there are consistent perpetrators or acts of violence occurring, it is the responsibility of those who work with victims to help assist the victim in being safe and protected and also show empathy for the perpetrator by finding alternative methods such as peaceful conflict resolution approaches to help these individuals decrease their need for inflicting violence and aggression on others.

### ***The Perpetrator and the Principles of "C.R.I.M.E."***

There are several ways the perpetrator can show compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy. One way is to get help. Whether you cyber bully people or abuse and gossip about people, there is a reason behind why you do what you do. It could be childhood problems you had or still have if you are an adolescent or just family problems such as you were abused yourself once upon a time. If you find out why you do it, then maybe you can find out how to stop it. Many abusers in relationships do it because they may feel they are not getting the respect they feel they deserve but if you feel that way, maybe you should just leave from the relationship yourself instead of responding by hurting the person.

Bullies much of the time bully people because they are getting bullied by someone else or have been bullied in the past and just did not know how to handle it or felt they could not. Instead of taking it out on others, a perpetrator of violence should look at their experience and develop positive inspiration and motivation to make sure no one else gets put in a situation like that.

### ***The Bystanders and the Principles of “C.R.I.M.E.”***

Sometimes innocent bystanders witness people who are victims of dating violence, cyber bullying, and relational violence. Most bystanders would sympathize with the victim because it seems like they are the only one who has been hurt. In these situations, bystanders should show compassion for both people involved. They can show compassion for the victim by calling authorities for to get them help. They can show compassion for the culprits by getting them help to actually change their ways, instead of just throwing them in prison. The next quality that bystanders need to show is empathy. Bystanders can show empathy for the victim by understanding that sometimes victims stand up for themselves, but continue to be bullied. Also, there are times that a victim struggles with being able to stand up for herself. There may be many potential reasons for this silence. For example, was it possibly witnessing a mother being abused and not being able to say anything? The bystander can show empathy for the culprit by reflecting on what may have made them that way. Were they abused? Did they not have a father figure? The next quality the bystanders need to show is respect. The way bystanders show respect is by not saying things, such as “This woman deserves it.”

## **Conclusion**

In two years, the C.R.I.M.E. Teens project has achieved multiple goals such as authoring two books, starting to outline and write a third, presenting to hundreds of people on the effects of familial, relational, and community violence, and networking with many other youth and community organizations in the field of violence and trauma.

These goals are proud accomplishments of the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project, but what has been the most monumental achievement of the program and the most instrumental in keeping the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project running is the passion and engagement that the youth exhibit as leaders in their program. As stated in this paper, we attribute our abilities to be well-rounded leaders, public speakers, and communicators to our experience in the C.R.I.M.E. Teens program.

In addition to the content-specific skills that we have been able to attain through participating in the C.R.I.M.E. Teens Project, by participating in a youth-led model rooted in empowerment, we have also been able to gain a number of values. These values are clearly demonstrated when we analyze and explore how the victims, perpetrators, and bystanders engaged in forms of violence can still utilize values of compassion, respect, inspiration, motivation, and empathy. It is not an easy task for any person, particularly an individual that has a personal and traumatic experience with relational violence, cyber-bullying, or teen dating violence, yet we pride ourselves on our resilience and hope to teach all teens of their own abilities to be resilient in dealing with hardship and empowered to take charge of their lives.

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