



ANNA E. STANTON is an eighth grader at Rocky River Middle School. She is active in her church youth group and enjoys playing trumpet in the jazz and concert band. She likes science, especially chemistry, and is interested in a medical career.

"Your house is cooler than you are!" Jared* told Mike at lunch. Like little 5 year olds, Jared and Kevin, who are in eighth grade, always make fun of Mike in school saying he is "uncool" and gay. One day, they ruined his lunch by pouring chocolate milk in his salad. Mike hadn't done anything to them. He is a smart kid who just happens to like music, which somehow makes him a dork in their eyes. When Mike gets bullied he just slumps over in his chair like he suddenly turned into a snake, without saying a word. Even though I get disturbed by people's words and actions, I've done nothing to stop it. It makes me almost as guilty as the tormentors are.

Bullying to anyone is unacceptable. I hear ridiculous things coming from people's mouths in the hallway everyday. It is completely absurd and really bothersome. When I hear Mike getting bullied, all I want to do is stand up for him, but I don't. He probably feels like he is getting manipulated like a little toy. Why don't people stand up for each other? Is it because we are afraid of becoming the victim? If that is the case, then we are all acting like chickens. Well, when I had enough of hearing Mike getting bullied, it was too late to stand up for him because the damage had already been done, so I told my parents about the situation. Then they called the school. The next day, Jared and Kevin had to eat lunch with the guidance counselor and had a little chat about how to treat people. Even though at first I was silent, I eventually spoke up and the situation stopped.

In the future when I hear or witness somebody getting bullied, there has to be a way to stop it without getting my name involved if I am too chicken to do so. My school already has a thing called a bully box, but everybody just makes fun of it; they don't take it seriously. A step that can be taken to prevent this bully box from becoming a joke is to have the principal or guidance counselor talk at an assembly about the seriousness of bullying. Then hopefully it could get middle school students to realize that bullying isn't a joke and it needs to be reported in some anonymous way sometimes. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends ." This quote relates to speaking out. It might take a lot of courage to put a situation into the bully box, but what is more meaningful to people is when people speak up for each other. So schools should start off with a bully box then take it a step further to standing up for one another. Bullying is a serious example of hate and it needs to stop. So why not start today?

** All names have been changed*