



**CLAIRE ELIZABETH
BRUENING**

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Hate is slowly becoming part of our daily lives. One thing that feeds on this hate is bullying, and if we don't stop it, it will grow into something much more destructive. This is how the Holocaust started, with bullying and discrimination. I'm a living witness to something like that. It's not a best friend, not a friend, not even a classmate. It's my brother. My brother has Down syndrome, a condition that's caused because he has one more chromosome than most people, like you or me.

My brother James* is bullied because of that condition, which makes him look and act a little different. It's not contagious, although many people think otherwise. James is bullied in one of the cruelest ways possible. Here's an example. He's on the bus, talking with other kids that he thinks are his friends, and one of them says, "Hey James go say ---- to Maddie*!" They have told him to say a really bad word to that person. James has no idea what the word means, yet he says it anyway, because he trusts that person. He says it, the person tells on him, and he's sent to the principal's office for something he really didn't know he was doing. People like my brother, with Down syndrome, or anyone really, need people to stick up for them if the situation continues. They don't know how to, can't, or are too scared to stand up for themselves. Stop the hate. How? As Martin Luther King (1929-1968) said, "Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

People need to see the inside of a person. They shouldn't see just the outside disabilities. I have a friend named George*. He often sits by himself at lunch. He's in a wheelchair because of his physical handicap. If you take a moment to talk with him, like I did one day, you'll find he's really sweet, intelligent, and funny. It's now a daily routine for me to talk with George. If I didn't take a moment to talk to him that one day at lunch, I wouldn't have discovered his intelligence.

Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." People are judging people by their outside appearances instead of the inside. It's the first step towards hate and the separation of people. George wasn't bullied, but neglected. Feeling forgotten is one of results of hate. We can stop the hate by listening to, talking to, or standing up for those that are bullied, neglected, or treated unfairly. That's what I'm going to do, what about you?

** Names have been changed*