



MYLEANA SLEPKO

is an 8th grader at Eastern Heights Middle School in Elyria. She loves playing sports, listening to music and reading. Myleana also plays basketball and participates in school band and choir. She would like a career bettering the lives of others.

Hate and discrimination is everywhere around us. Some is easily spotted, some more difficult to find. Some hate may seem like an innocent joke, but it could have more serious consequences. These consequences could cost someone their life. Victims often crack under the pressure and hate. They need a hero to help speak up and be their voice; a voice that could possibly save their lives.

I have a friend who cracked under all the hate and discrimination. His name is Ryan*, he is discriminated against because he has made some mistakes in his life. He got hooked on drugs a few years back, and kids began teasing Ryan when they saw him in the hallways at school. He would keep his head down and keep moving on. He went home and cried. One night he stole his mother's car. He was going 100 mph and ran off the road. The car hit a tree, ran through a fence, and rolled three times. The entire car was destroyed, except the driver's seat. Ryan was lucky the airbag went off. The police officers said the airbag was the only thing that kept Ryan alive. Ryan was taken to the hospital in a helicopter. I went to visit Ryan and when he saw me, he looked at me and told me he wanted to die.

Ryan and I are very close friends, and this experience strongly affected me. I now understand how harmful hate is. Hate almost took Ryan's life. I was devastated at the thought of how discrimination and hate affects a person so much they wish themselves dead. I visited Ryan everyday in the hospital, for the three weeks he was there. Seeing him lying in that hospital bed made me feel sick, but I knew this experience changed his life. Ryan was so thankful and when he returned to school he began to speak up against the hate.

I began to speak too. I joined an Anti-Bully group called Task Force at my school. In this group we stand up for the victims of discrimination and bullying. I was moved by all the consequences of hate. I do everything I can to help stop the hate in the hallways of my school. I am planning to start another small group with my friends to help speak out against discrimination. In this group I hope to go around to different groups of people and talk to them about the consequences of hate.

Hate is a very powerful emotion, which should never be used against a person. The consequences for this could be more serious than the intentions it had originally. Some discrimination is thought of as a joke. Some laugh along with these "jokes", others just watch and keep quiet. People need to speak up and help these victims. The victims need a voice; they need a hero to speak, a voice that could possibly save their lives.

**Name has been changed*