STOP THE HATE®
YOUTH speak out!!!

MONICA McDONOUGH
is an 8th grader at Rocky River Middle School. She enjoys sports—especially soccer and hurdles, and also sings in her school's chamber choir. Monica is interested in mythology, psychology and acting and hopes to be a published author someday.

Sprawled on my bed like a broken toy, I had never cried so hard in my life. Tears sat heavily on my eyelids- leaden with the words glaring on my cell phone. Although helpful, cell phones can be weapons because I have experienced cyber-bullying, responded, and formulated a plan to help others overcome hatred.

My first time as a target of hatred was unforgettable. As a straight-A student I have always prided myself on my grades. But one day I was wrongly accused of cheating on a crucial test. Hot shame and intense embarrassment can't even begin to cover the torrent of bitter emotions whipping inside me. I was shattered. Late that night, a close friend was harassing me, threatening to tell the school that I really did cheat. The occasional tear became a constant flow. How could she do this to me? So blatantly targeted, I easily began to hate others. I hated my teacher, the cheaters, and my old friend until I realized that I was only creating more ripples, sending more waves of hate into a universe flooded with catastrophe.

The most disturbing part of that experience was how easily everyone succumbed to hate. With no motive, one of my best friends destroyed my life! Even though I was a victim I was bitter, cold, and yes, hateful. It took me months to forgive her and I made cutting comments about my teacher. Once I realized how hatred had devoured me, I took a step back and contemplated my actions. My actions were driven by hate! I was a passenger in my own life, and hatred was driving. Now I have a plan to gain back authority.

The first step to stopping hatred is realizing that it's a habit. Why can't we break the cycle? Hate isn't a part of human nature but is easily vested deep inside us. Therefore, the second step of my plan is for schools to campaign for students to change themselves. I believe that by bettering ourselves we can better others by example which in turn can better our community and so on. Another part of the campaign should be celebrating and learning about diversity. Diversity is such an enormous cause of hate because people are fearful of the unknown! If we can impart hatred we can impart a love of all cultures so future generations will not only never learn hate, but not even be exposed to it.

It's imperative that we unlearn the hate inside us. We have all experienced and responded to hate but now we must follow a plan to stop it. President Barack Obama said, "We are the people we've been waiting for." We have to save ourselves and stop the hate. We must unlearn it, change ourselves, help our friends change, revolutionize our community, and who knows? We could change the world.