# A reflection of who we are

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**Written by: Sara Gunderson**



*This op-ed by Tess Davis, Senior Policy Analyst at Voices for Utah Children, was originally published at the* Deseret News on November 21, 2016*.*

I am deeply troubled by much of the behavior being reported around the country in the wake of the presidential election, particularly within our schools. Here in Utah, there were reports that Granite School District had begun receiving “reports of students being bullied because of their race, gender or ethnicity on the heels of Donald Trump winning the election.” There is nothing anyone can change at this point about the outcome of the election, but what we can and must change is our behavior. This kind of harassment and bullying is doing harm to vulnerable children, and it diminishes who we are as Utahns and Americans. It has to stop.

At Voices for Utah Children, we believe in the right of each child to learn and grow in a nurturing environment free of harassment, intimidation or fear. Kids and families from all races, ethnic backgrounds, religions and walks of life help make Utah the vibrant and wonderful place it is. Like many of our districts, Granite School District is a microcosm for the growing diversity of our state. Granite’s schools are home to


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nearly 70,000 racially, culturally and linguistically diverse K-12 students, all of whom help to broaden one another's social and cultural horizons through their similarities and their differences alike.

I have lived in many places around the world throughout my life, but I have always thought of Utah as "home." Like all people, we are far from perfect, but I have nearly always found Utahns to be essentially kind and tolerant of others' differences. (A year ago, for example, while mosques and Muslim community centers were being targeted and vandalized across the United States, community members in Logan came together outside the local Islamic Center with messages of love and support for their Muslim friends and neighbors who worshipped there.)

Forecasts for the next four years are fraught with uncertainty. But today, right now, none of that matters. How we voted is irrelevant. What our children hear people saying on television and social media is irrelevant. What matters right now is what they hear us say. It is critically important that we sit our children down, look them in the face and remind them that every person has value. We have to remind our children, and ourselves, that how we treat others is a reflection of who we are. And who we are is better than this.

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For 30 years now, Voices for Utah Children has called on our state, federal and local leaders to put children's needs first. But the work is not done. The children of 30 years ago now have children of their own. Too many of these children are growing up in poverty, without access to healthcare or quality educational opportunities.

**How can you be involved?**

Make a tax-deductible donation to Voices for Utah Children—or join our Network with a monthly donation of $20 or more.  Network membership includes complimentary admission to Network events with food, socializing, and opportunity to meet child advocacy experts. And don't forget to join our listserv to stay informed!

We look forward to the future of Voices for Utah Children and we hope you will be a part of our next 30 years.



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