

# JENNA MCLAUGHLIN

## TOGETHER WE STAND: ENCOURAGING KINDNESS AND PERSEVERANCE IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

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This past year, I authored and published my first children’s book about bullying, “*Roxanne Takes a Stand*” which is available on Amazon and local stores. The book follows Roxanne as she inspires young girls to use positive words and interactions to empower one another. Through this book, I am inspiring children to become the strong voice I wish I had when experiencing bullying.

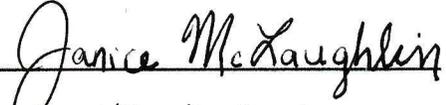
In middle school, I witnessed one of my best friends being teased by a group of teenage boys. Putting myself in my friend’s shoes and hearing someone speak in such a harmful manner ignited a fire within me and gave me the courage to speak up. I spoke up against hatred and bigotry and by doing so was recognized by my teachers, principal, and peers as a “Change Agent.” This not only gave me the confidence to stop bullying behavior in its tracks, but also sparked dialogue, a class assembly, and new policies.

Though I’ve been bullied intermittently throughout my life, it wasn’t until high school these instances became more frequent. People were witnessing this behavior, but nobody stood up for me. I had to build myself back up again from my lowest point to realize I can turn this pain into purpose, and help people through my story. I first began writing songs and blog posts, until I eventually founded the “Girl Empowerment Program.” In this program, I meet with high school-aged girls and provide a supportive, safe space to share dreams and ambitions. In our meetings, we host guest speakers, encourage leadership skills, have meaningful conversations, and encourage female friendships and alliances. My passion for female empowerment led me to fundraise for amazing organizations such as the National Organization for Women and the Malala Foundation for Girls’ Education. I have also spoken with my local Brownie Troop as a way to instill compassion, and confidence in young girls through the Girl Scouts of America organization. These instances ultimately led me to my dream of becoming a published author.

My book and story have impacted people across the country, and of all ages. As quoted from a parent after receiving my book, “Thank you Jenna for being an inspiration to my girls.” The title of Miss Massachusetts Outstanding Teen would give me a larger platform to continue being a role model for young girls. I will go on a book tour and read my book- *Roxanne Takes a Stand*. I will also meet with Massachusetts’ youth about the importance of perseverance and kindness.

Experiencing bullying was the hardest thing I have ever had to endure. However, I truly believe this experience helped to shape me into the person I am today- a person who is fully prepared to share her heart, and fully prepared for the title of Miss Massachusetts’ Outstanding Teen.

  
Candidate Signature

  
Parent/Guardian Signature