



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on April 19, 2011

## Bull About Bullying

There is a lot of talk from many people about bullying in school. The problem is that it is all talk. There is no sign that anybody is going to do anything that is likely to reduce bullying.

When politicians want to do nothing, and yet look like they are doing something, they appoint a blue ribbon committee or go to the U.N. or assign some Cabinet member to look into the problem and report back to the President — hoping that the issue will be forgotten by the time he reports back.

When educators are going to do nothing, they express great concern and make pious public pronouncements. They may even hold conferences, write op-ed pieces or declare a “no tolerance” policy. But they are still not going to do anything that is likely to stop bullying.

In some rough schools, they can’t even stop the bullying of teachers by the hooligans in their classes, much less stop the bullying of students.

Not all of this is the educators’ fault. The courts have created a legal climate where any swift and decisive action against bullies can lead to lawsuits. The net results are indecision, half-hearted gestures and pious public pronouncements by school officials, none of which is going to stop bullies.

When judges create new “rights” for bullies out of thin air, just as they do for criminals, and prescribe “due process” for school discipline, just as if schools were little courtrooms, then nothing is likely to happen promptly or decisively.

If there is anything worse than doing nothing, it is doing nothing spiced with empty rhetoric about what behavior is “unacceptable” — while in fact accepting it.

Might educators abuse their power, if the courts did not step in? Of course they could. Any power exercised by human beings can be abused. But, without the ability to exercise power, there is anarchy.

When responsible officials are prevented from exercising power, then bullies exercise power.

President Barack Obama has joined the chorus of those deploring bullying. But his own administration is pushing the notion that a disproportionate number of suspensions or other punishments for members of particular racial or ethnic groups is discriminatory.

In other words, if a school suspends more black males than Asian females, that is taken as a sign of discrimination. No one in his right mind really believes that, but it is part of the grand make-believe that pervades our politics and even our courts.

For years, there have been stories in New York and Philadelphia newspapers about black kids beating





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up Asian classmates. But do not expect anybody to do anything that is likely to put a stop to it.

If these were white kids beating up Hispanic kids, cries of outrage would ring out across the land from the media, the politicians, the churches and civic groups. But it is not politically correct to make a fuss when black kids beat up Asian kids.

None of this is unique to the United States, by the way. The same mushy-minded attitudes have been carried even further in Britain, both as regards criminals and as regards bullies in the schools.

Britain was once one of the most law-abiding nations on earth. But the reluctance of the left to put some serious punishment on criminals has been carried so far there that only 7 percent of convicted criminals actually spend any time behind bars. Britain has now overtaken the United States in various crime rates.

Years ago, there was a book published in Britain titled *Murder in The Playground*. The boy who ended up killing a fellow student on the school playground had previously committed crimes ranging from motorcycle theft to arson that created more than \$50,000 worth of damage in school. For the latter, he was given 24 hours' detention.

People who say that we should learn from other countries almost always mean that we should imitate what other countries do. But one of the most important things we can learn from other countries is to avoid the mistakes they have made.

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