



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on October 25, 2011

The Media and “Bullying”

Holmes said: “I cannot but ask myself why this so much greater interest in red than black.”

To put it bluntly, it was a question of whose ox was gored. That is, what groups were in vogue at the moment among the intelligentsia. Blacks clearly were not.

The current media and political crusade against “bullying” in schools seems likewise to be based on what groups are in vogue at the moment. For years, there have been local newspaper stories about black kids in schools in New York and Philadelphia beating up Asian classmates, some beaten so badly as to require medical treatment.



But the national media hear no evil, see no evil, and speak no evil. Asian Americans are not in vogue today, just as blacks were not in vogue in the 1920s.

Meanwhile, the media are focused on bullying directed against youngsters who are homosexual. Gays are in vogue.

Most of the stories about the bullying of gays in schools are about words directed against them, not about their suffering the violence that has long been directed against Asian youngsters or about the failure of the authorities to do anything serious to stop black kids from beating up Asian kids.

Where youngsters are victims of violence, whether for being gay or whatever, that is where the authorities need to step in. No decent person wants to see kids hounded, whether by words or deeds, and whether the kids are gay, Asian or whatever.

But there is still a difference between words and deeds — and it is a difference we do not need to let ourselves be stampeded into ignoring. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees freedom of speech — and, like any other freedom, it can be abused.

If we are going to take away every Constitutional right that has been abused by somebody, we are going to end up with no Constitutional rights.

Already, on too many college campuses, there are vaguely worded speech codes that can punish students for words that may hurt somebody’s feelings — but only the feelings of groups that are in vogue.

Women can say anything they want to men, or blacks to whites, with impunity. But strong words in the other direction can bring down on students the wrath of the campus thought police — as well as punishments that can extend to suspension or expulsion.

Is this what we want in our public schools?

The school authorities can ignore the beating up of Asian kids but homosexual organizations have enough political clout that they cannot be ignored. Moreover, there are enough avowed homosexuals



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among journalists that they have their own National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association — so continuing media publicity will ensure that the authorities will have to “do something.”

But political pressures to “do something” have been behind many counterproductive and even dangerous policies.

A grand jury report about bullying in the schools of San Mateo County, California, brought all sorts of expressions of concern from school authorities — but no definition of “bullying” nor any specifics about just what they plan to do about it.

Meanwhile, a law has been passed in California that mandates teaching about the achievements of gays in the public schools. Whether this will do anything to stop either verbal or physical abuse of gay kids is very doubtful.

But it will advance the agenda of homosexual organizations and can turn homosexuality into yet another of the subjects on which words on only one side are permitted. Our schools are already too lacking in the basics of education to squander even more time on propaganda for politically correct causes that are in vogue. We do not need to create special privileges in the name of equal rights.

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