

You are the master of your fate and the captain of your soul

"Don't let the iron in you get rusted"

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Bullying is also known as harassment, teasing, intimidation or abuse at school. Bullying comes from the English term "bully", which means "roughneck" or "aggressor", and "bull", the animal. As regards the latter, when it comes to human behavior it would mean to "tease", "provoke", "bother." More specifically, bullying entails intimidation, oppression, isolation, threats and insults towards one or several victims. In the realm of adults, bullying becomes known as "mobbing" or harassment at work.

Although bullying is a typical and extreme form of violence and aggression at school, it may also occur in any group sharing time on a regular basis, such as clubs, churches, sports, and leisure activities, amongst others. It consists of emotional, verbal, physical and/or psychological abuse repeatedly inflicted upon a person. It may also arise by systematically isolating or excluding someone from one or several groups.

Aggressors usually suffer from some kind of personality disorder, mainly owing to a lack of empathy, altruism or limits at home, all of which then translate in their conduct at school. On other occasions, aggressors have been victims of sibling or parental violence and take it out with others to get even with someone and work off their anger. The lack of family love, good role models and human values education leads to the wrong idea that people may be abused at one's own will.

Aggressors' personal pride is normally built at the expense of others and children who bully usually have a very low tolerance to frustration. In general, when choosing potential victims, aggressors pick someone who shows the aggressors' limitations or needs up or else that stands out for his or her intelligence, eccentricity or beauty, or simply someone who is somehow more vulnerable.

Bullies' power does not lie only on their inherent characteristics, such as physical or psychological strength, but rests rather on the support of their followers. The supportive group of an aggressive leader usually welcomes the leader's actions and conduct in spite of the fact that many times they do not agree with such behavior. However, followers don't dare to confront the leader for fear of being the next target.

To fight against bullying, it is essential that the victim neither suffers in silence nor hides behind his or her fear. Talking to responsible adults (parents, teachers, headmasters) that may be able to

step in and take action to support and protect the victim, teach him how to defend and wipe away abusive and aggressive conducts becomes vital.

Experts say that in the institutions where bullying has occurred the best thing to do is to gather interdisciplinary work teams and force the aggressor to undergo treatment together with his or her family. In the same vein, the victim's family need be accompanied and provided with verbal and gesture strategies that would allow them to defensively stand up against the teaser.

Now, it is of utmost importance to tackle bullying peacefully and efficiently through prevention, theoretical and practical civic virtues education among children and youth, and the watchful eye of adults and classmates so as to detect and report any bullying behavior in order to cope with it through non-violent means. In this respect, the wise words of Mahatma Gandhi as to *lex talionis* are worth recalling: "*An eye for an eye, and soon the whole world is blind.*"

In sum, the seriousness of harassment at school and the different forms of violence embodied in bullying constitute a blatant violation of Human Rights and of the Constitutional Rights of different countries around the world.

Aiming at contributing to wipe away such a terrible and widespread phenomenon, the World Academy of Arts, Literature and Media (WAALM), in one of its heartfelt humanistic projects, decided to launch an international campaign against bullying under the motto "Be a victor, not a victim" and "One song, one message, many voices". The song "Walking in style" is meant to encourage bravery, strength and optimism to victims of bullying and to create social awareness so that it can be detected and treated properly. This song, which is performed by talented artists from twenty different countries and four continents, was envisioned by two great masters: Dr. Mosi Dorbayani (lyrics) and Loghman Adhami (main music composer).

In line with the spiritual strength of the music and lyrics of such a magnificent song, the title of this article is inspired in the poem "Invictus", written in 1875 by William Ernest Henley, lying in bed in hospital. The last verses of the poem pray as follows:

*"I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

In the words of Dr. Dorbayani, we would say: "Be a victor, not a victim". This implies, as already noted, that those suffering from bullying are urged not to suffer in silence but to trust in adults and competent authorities, to seek for help and never and ever fall in the dramatic and hideous trap of suicide. All those suffering from this type of harassment should remember that there are many people who love them, that whatever the teasers may say is not true and that such malicious behavior is driven by wrong ideas.

But it may be even further relevant that the victims of bullying know that they have resources to overcome such abuses. In other words, to walk through life with dignity and heads held high, to "Walking in style" no matter everything around seems hard and ugly, to never stop believing in themselves and to peacefully and tenaciously fight to set them free.

I am fairly confident that the power and beauty of this song, from its music, lyrics and multiple versions, would help bullying victims identify with it and get the strength and certainty to face bullying.

Finally, I will quote two more examples of the best way out of bullying, which closely relate to the concepts illustrated in "Walking in style": the movie called "Ciberbully" (Charles Binamé, USA, 2011) and the message delivered by American motivational speaker Lizzie Velázquez in her speech "Brave starts here", delivered at TEDx Austin Women last December 5, 2013:

<http://www.aboutlizzie.com/#!lizzies-story/ccm8>

Here are some of her most inspiring words of wisdom:

"Am I going to let the people who called me a monster, define me. Am I going to let the people who said, kill it with fire, define me. No. You are the one that decides what defines you. I used the people who were telling me that I couldn't do this – to motivate me. I used their negativity to light my fire to keep going, use that."

As you may well imagine, in Velásquez' words "fire" means illuminating energy, passion and strength of the soul capable of turning negative criticism into intelligence, humor, cunning and peaceful resistance that will not only enable a way out of bullying but also let our projects, goals and dreams come true.

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