Bullying

**Bird bullying perpetuated: Native to the Galapagos Islands, Nazca boobies nest in huge, crowded colonies, where adults frequently bite and peck their neighbors’ chicks. A Wake Forest University-led study shows that the birds more frequently abused as chicks are more likely to engage in such bullying as adults. Researchers are examining the role of early exposure to avian stress hormones in driving violent tendencies later in life. (Smithsonian magazine)**

**Torture numbers, and they’ll confess to anything. (Gregg Easterbrook, in The New Republic)**

**When a resolute fellow steps up to that great bully, the world, and takes him boldly by the beard, he is often surprised to find that the beard comes off in his hand, that it was only tied on to scare away timid adventurers. *(Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.)***

**Whitney Kropp was surprised when she was named to her high school homecoming court this month. By her own admission, the 16-year-old was not one of the popular kids at school. Her delight turned to humiliation when she learned she had been voted in as a cruel joke. But after word of the mean-spirited prank spread around her town of West Branch, Michigan, outraged residents decided to turn the tables on the high school bullies. Local businesses presented Kropp with a gown and a full makeover for the dance, and hundreds of locals will cheer her on at this weekend’s homecoming game. “I can prove everyone wrong,” a deeply touched Kropp said. (The Week magazine, October 5, 2012)**

**Only in America: A Wisconsin city has passed a law authorizing police to ticket and fine parents whose children are bullies. The city of Monona’s parent-liability ordinance is aimed at parents who consistently deny that their kids could do any wrong and refuse to talk to police after bullying incidents. “This is for those times when we get the door slammed in our faces,” said Monona’s police chief. (The Week magazine, June 14, 2013)**

**Lawyer’s shouldn’t be bullies: A sex-abuse survivor was bullied to death last month – in court, said Alison Phillips. Frances Andrade, a married mother of four, had been giving evidence that her former teacher had sexually abused her when he was a 14-year-old violinist at a prestigious music academy. The “clearly vulnerable” Andrade didn’t initiate the proceedings against her teacher and reportedly didn’t want to dredge up the past – she’d had an unhappy childhood and suffered from depression – but once called to the stand she spoke her piece. Then the defense lawyer ripped into her, called her a liar and an attention-seeker, and “tied her in verbal knots” until she couldn’t keep dates and details from her past straight. Andrade burst into tears in the courtroom and killed herself a week later. She never lived to see the guilty verdict after pronounced against her abuser. And Andrade was just one of the many rape victims “routinely humiliated and traumatized in our courts every year.” Experts estimate that more than 90 percent of rapes go unreported. Of those reported, just 12 percent result in a conviction, and bullying of the victim surely plays a large part in that low rate. Until judges put restrictions on such vicious cross-examination, “there will be no justice for victims.” (The Week magazine, March 1, 2013)**

**Bullying’s lifelong damage: Childhood bullying appears to set kids up for a lifetime of mental health problems. That’s the conclusion of Duke University researchers, who interviewed 1,400 kids between the ages of 9 and 16 about their social lives and checked back in with them again between the ages of 19 and 26. They found that children who had been the victims of bullying were four times more likely to have an anxiety disorder as adults than kids who had never experienced bullying. Kids who did the bullying, on the other hand, were four times more likely to have an anti-social personality disorder. The most troubled group, it turned out, was the kids who had been both bullies and victims: They were 14 times more likely to develop a panic disorder and nearly five times more likely to be depressed. “The biggest cry for help is coming from that group,” study author William Copeland tells Slate.com. He says he’s “starting to view bullying the same way I do abuse in the home,” as “something that has very detrimental, and very long-lasting, effects.” (The Week magazine, March 15, 2013)**

**Eight-limbed ocean bullies: Octopuses are some of the smartest creatures on the planet. Studies have shown they can solve problems, use tools, escape captivity, and possibly even display humor. As well as being brainiacs, it now seems these cephalopods can also be bullying brutes. Researchers made the discovery while studying videos of octopuses working with fish to finds food in the Red Sea, reports The Times (U.K.). They saw that during these hunting sessions, the octopuses would occasionally "punch" out at fish. Described as a "swift, explosive motion with one arm directed at a specific fish partner," these punches were sometimes thrown to stop a fish from gobbling prey that the octopus wanted. But at other times there appeared to be no logical reason behind the blows. One possibility is that the octopuses were trying to keep potentially mischievous fish in line so that they could work better together in the long term. Another possibility, says lead researcher Eduardo Sampaio, from the Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre in Lisbon, is that octopuses are thugs who get thrill from hitting something smaller. In other words, the assaults are motivated by "spite." (The Week magazine, January 22, 2021)**

**Last week’s front-page story in The Washington Post about the young Mitt Romney’s bullying a gay prep-school classmate in 1965 raises serious questions about “the man who seeks to become the most powerful person in the world.” Romney, the Post revealed, became incensed when an effeminate classmate, John Lauber, returned to the wealthy prep school from vacation with bleached hair and hung down over one eye. “He can’t look like that,” Romney told his pals. “That’s wrong. Just look at him!” The tall, wealthy Romney then organized a posse of friends who held down the screaming, weeping Lauber while Romney chopped off the blond locks with scissors. In a telling comment, said Amy Davidson in NewYorker.com, Romney denied any memory of the attack, conceding with a chuckle that “I participated in a lot of hijinks and pranks during high school.” Is brutalizing a gay classmate merely “a prank?” Perhaps that same inability to see the world, “from anyone’s perspective but his own” explains why, as a Republican presidential candidate, this smugly privileged man opposes letting gays and lesbians marry their partners. (The Week magazine, May 25, 2012)**

**Why not stigmatize the obese? I get that times have changed, said Rod Liddle. “In my school days, every class I was in had one fat kid, whom everyone bullied until he cried, and that was it.” Nowadays, of course, skinny kids aren’t supposed to make fun of their heavier classmates, and perhaps that’s for the better. But why not mock the grown-ups? National Health authorities have just issued new guidelines telling doctors “not to use the word ‘obese’ when delivering advice to the sweating mountains of compacted land” that waddle into their offices. Evidently “obese” is seen as a derogatory term that might hurt people’s feelings. Don’t they realize that’s the kind of kick we all need? I’m overweight, and once, after a local poll called me a fat slob, I was so mortified I took to the treadmill for six grueling weeks. Maybe “if I were stigmatized a bit more regularly, I might get down to the gym more often, or cut out the wine.” In fact, if we remove the stigma from obesity, what’s to prevent us from succumbing to the siren song of KFC? It’s far too easy to avoid the truth if nobody calls you fat to your face. (The Week magazine, May 25, 2012)**

**Until recently, Masters of the Universe never had to say they were sorry. As anyone who's been in a schoolyard knows, most people defer to and even admire bullies. The key, titans like Harvey Weinstein and Roger Ailes instinctively knew, is to maintain the illusion that you are invincible. No one will dare to check if you really are. And even if they do, you can rely on the belief that you're just Too Big to Fail. But as the dominoes continue to fall, U.S. companies are discovering that morally reprehensible executives, TV anchors, and other big stars are not indispensable. When they leave, replacements will step in, the gears will continue to turn, and the business will survive. All the thousands of people who've kept it going will keep doing their jobs. In fact, they'll do them better, because they won't have to worry about being sexually harassed, demoted, pushed out, or bullied by the boss. (Mark Gimein, in The Week magazine, September 21, 2018)**

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