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Dramatic Publishing

The Bully Plays

*friendship
love*

Sandra Fenichel Asher

Cherie Bennett

Max Bush

José Casas

Gloria Bond Clunie

Eric Coble

Doug Cooney

Linda Daugherty

Lisa Dillman

Richard Dresser

José Cruz González

Stephen Gregg

D.W. Gregory

Brian Guehring

Dwayne Hartford

Barry Kornhauser

Trish Lindberg

Brett Neveu

Ernie Nolan

R.N. Sandberg

Geraldine Ann Snyder

Werner Trieschmann

Elizabeth Wong

Y York



**BULLY
FREE**



Compiled and edited by
Linda Habjan

Foreword by Susan Sugerman, MD, MPH



The Bully Plays



Drama/Comedy. Written by Sandra Fenichel Asher, Cherie Bennett, Max Bush, José Casas, Gloria Bond Clunie, Eric Coble, Doug Cooney, Linda Daugherty, Lisa Dillman, Richard Dresser, José Cruz González, Stephen Gregg, D.W. Gregory, Brian Guehring, Dwayne Hartford, Barry Kornhauser, Trish Lindberg, Brett Neveu, Ernie Nolan, R.N. Sandberg, Geraldine Ann Snyder, Werner Trieschmann, Elizabeth Wong and Y York. Compiled and edited by Linda Habjan.

Cast: 2 to 25+. This anthology was commissioned in response to the growing epidemic of bullying and the all-too-often tragic results. The anthology includes 24 10-minute plays that can be performed in any combination or length and in a variety of venues. The plays are touching, imaginative, powerful, uplifting and funny. A botched chemistry experiment creates a horde of homophobic teenage zombie bullies. A teenager poignantly relates to his dad how a bullied classmate resorted to physical violence. Three dinosaurs at a museum surprise three bickering kids on a school outing. A bully is forced to confront his victim "on the other side." A boy confronts a beast in ancient Greece, who provides him with a different perspective on who's the beast. A girl on an anti-bullying crusade must face her own bullying. High-school kids discuss the heartbreak of realizing they contributed to a classmate's death by remaining bystanders. A mother and brother try to come to terms with the suicide of their "technicolor" son and brother. The trickle-down effect of bullying is explored in several plays, along with the dangers of cyber-bullying. The collection also includes a mimed piece and a play in rhymed verse. This collection of short plays will challenge, inspire and enlighten your audiences and help you confront the issue of bullying in a constructive and creative way. **Simple staging. Code: BG4.**

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24 Short Plays by

Sandra Fenichel Asher

Cherie Bennett

Max Bush

José Casas

Gloria Bond Clunie

Eric Coble

Doug Cooney

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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This collection of plays is funny, sad, powerful and important.

Bullying is a catch-phrase for treating others as less than human. All of these plays help teenagers develop their moral imaginations and see that there is no us/them. There is only us.

The Bully Plays is a tasty antidote to our toxic teen culture.

– Mary Pipher, Ph.D.

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Foreword

Bullying: Why So Much Drama?

We've all been there. At one time or another, we each have wished someone else would be reasonable and do it our way. We have cajoled, pleaded, begged or pressured another person to understand our own point of view and comply with our wishes. Hopefully, we did this with good intentions and with good reasons. In a perfect world, we want only the best for everyone, if not also for ourselves. But when is the line crossed between kind-hearted persuasion and bullying? Is it always so easy to tell?

Bullying differs from friendly teasing or gentle coaxing. Bullying is aggressive behavior intended to harm or show power over another person that is repeated over time. Teasing can be fun between friends, but it becomes bullying if only one person enjoys it while the other suffers. While taunting is easy to recognize as social aggression, more subtle forms of bullying, such as excluding someone, gossiping or spreading false rumors, can be harder to identify in real time. Bullying also happens when an aggressor tries to get others to join in “disliking” or “disrespecting” someone else, when people use friendship as a weapon for revenge, or when former “friends” withdraw attention to prove a point or display power. Cyberbullying (through the Internet or other electronic media) can include posting photos or comments designed to offend, threaten, harass, or make someone look bad.

Bullies have a strong need to show their dominance over others or to get their own way. While many are well-connected to their peers and have a definite social “power,” they may be overly concerned about their popularity. Interestingly, girls are as equally aggressive as boys but tend to use different tactics. Surprisingly, most bullies have average or better-than-average self-esteem; they do not tend to be anxious or insecure. On the other hand, some bullies suffer from depression or anxiety as well as low self-esteem. These children seem to be easily pressured by peers and do not identify with the emotions or feelings of others. Still other risk factors include aggressive behavior, having less parent involvement, impulsive behavior, poor frustration tolerance, and having a positive view of violence. Over the long term, people who bully persistently in childhood never learn realistic long-term friendship skills. They have higher risks of abusing alcohol and other drugs, are more likely to engage in violent and criminal behavior, and are more likely to be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses or children when they become adults.

Victims of bullying tend to be children who are less popular or new to a situation. Kids who appear anxious or fearful may be easy targets for bullies looking to show themselves as more powerful or intimidating. Children and teens with academic, physical, or social “differences” can experience subtle to severe teasing, taunting and outright abuse, as those in “power” try to assert dominance. Victims tend not to get along well with others, have few friends, and have low self-esteem. Children or teens who do not conform to gender norms may be particularly at risk. Ultimately, kids who get bullied may become secretive, moody, depressed, angry, or may turn to destructive coping behaviors (school avoidance, eating disorders, drug use, self-harm or suicide).

At the extremes, they are more likely to retaliate through extremely violent means.

Bystanders, who don't know what to do, feel powerless and frustrated and may begin to internalize negative feelings for the victim as a way to justify their lack of action. They, too, are at increased risk for alcohol and drug abuse, depression and anxiety, and problems with school attendance or performance. While not directly involved in a bullying situation, during a time when children are supposed to be learning about friendships and intimacy, exposure to bullying can affect everyone's long-term relationship skills.

We know that bullying affects millions of teens every year. It happens in schools, on playgrounds, at summer camps, on the soccer field, and in chess clubs. It happens when adults have their backs turned and even when adults stand in plain view but fail to recognize it or intercede. It happens among peers and between siblings (and even parents). While the basic nature of social aggression in our time may not be so different from what happened a generation or two ago, the changing landscape of our society (e.g. fragmentation of families, increased work and financial demands on parents, let alone technological changes such as the Internet and social media) allows bullying to happen more often, more instantaneously, and more aggressively without the traditional checks and balances of a bygone era.

Why Dramatize Bullying?

While bullying may be pervasive, that doesn't mean it is healthy or normal. True, there is some value in learning to stand up for yourself against those out to humiliate or control you. Learning to bounce back and defend yourself

against social aggression builds true and lasting resilience. But it is a mistake to presume that bullying is an expected part of childhood to be tolerated as a “growing pain.” We live in a society, unfortunately, where bullying often crosses the line to cause real and lasting pain, dysfunction, and even life-threatening danger. It is time to do something about it.

Within this anthology you will find plays written for youth audiences to be staged by teen actors. As a teenager or an adult involved in these performances, ten minutes spent with any of these stories may change your perspective, open your eyes, or inspire you to do something to help yourself or someone you care about. If experiencing these plays helps even one person to recognize bullying, understand why it is happening, and take steps to stop it, then the effort will have been worth it. When art can be used to improve, not just imitate, life, we are all better off.

*Susan Sugerman, MD, MPH
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Preface

This anthology was commissioned to provide a format for confronting the issue of bullying and the traumatic, lifelong and sometimes tragic results. Many young people are under siege and fighting to survive in an environment where they feel they have no support—from their parents, teachers, and sometimes even their friends. Bullying can make going to school or a social event an agonizing experience, and it can have long-term adverse effects.

One way to approach such a universal problem is to get it out into the open and provide young people with strategies to deal with it in creative and empowering ways. This anthology of 10-minute plays offers a wide range of perspectives on the subject of bullying from some amazingly insightful and gifted playwrights. The plays themselves are touching, imaginative, powerful, uplifting and often very funny.

The Bully Plays includes 24 10-minute plays by 24 top playwrights. We requested that these authors pursue any and all avenues through which to address the subject and received a wide range of perspectives. These plays focus on bullying as it occurs between and among young people, their parents and siblings. They address the subject from the perspectives of bullies, the bullied and bystanders and revolve around gender, sexuality, physical condition, social status and many other issues. The plays also address how technology has increased not only the methods but also the scope of bullying.

These plays can be performed in any number and combination. You can perform them in traditional settings, such as the classroom or stage, or you can take them to non-traditional venues such as the school cafeteria or even the shopping mall. You can take them on the road to local elementary schools or to youth groups or camps. Because the subject of bullying is often too humiliating and painful to talk about, we hope these plays will stimulate discussion and become part of an ongoing project that will help people deal with bullying in a positive way. They can provide examples of ways to work out differences with respect, compassion, understanding and kindness. They can also help people come up with real solutions and effective ways to break the cycle of bullying. Positive emotions and behaviors are contagious, and this anthology of plays can help you take the steps to reverse the trend of bullying and create a “no tolerance” policy for bullying in your school or community.

Linda Habjan

Alex

(a conversation about nothing)

By José Casas

CHARACTER(S)

ALEXan animated 13-year-old boy who likes talking with his hands and who is on the verge of becoming a freshman and hiding the pain of being a teenager

SETTING AND TIME: The setting is anyplace a son could have a conversation with his dad. A chair and television are located onstage. The time is sometime in the afternoon on the same day that Alex's school was locked down over an incident of violence.

WORDS TO PONDER: *“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me, but I know that expression doesn't work.”*

– Alex Guillen (my nephew)

(LIGHTS are dark. The SOUNDS of kids making a commotion can be heard. An incident of violence is occurring at a middle school, and kids are reacting to it from the vantage point of their classrooms. In a sad way, it should almost sound like the audience cheering the Roman gladiators in battle. After a few moments, LIGHTS go up and we see ALEX. It seems like he is looking out the window. He begins pointing and is in mid-conversation.)

ALEX (*animated*). Like I was saying...they put the entire school on lockdown!!! The third time this year... Crazy... We saw the entire scene from class. Jerome went all Grand Theft Auto and everything. You could totally tell he was on drugs or something. Some of the kids say he was on cocaine and others were saying speed. I don't know. I just hear things but, like I was saying...it was, uhm... He looked like he was possessed. He ran away from his P.E. class and was still holding the bat they were using for the softball game. He runs up to Miss Walter's car and begins smashing out the side windows. Coach Liam and the security officer were trying to stop him, but they couldn't get close because he was swinging all over the place. He finally jumps onto the hood of the Prius and starts hitting the windshield. He was destroying that thing and you could tell he was getting angrier and angrier, like he didn't have any control over what he was doing... And everybody in class is crowding the windows to see what's happening even though Mrs. Garcia had told us to stay in our seats. (*Beat; guilty.*) And...I didn't listen to her, but, I should've... I didn't need to see Jerome like that.

(Extended beat. ALEX gets lost in his thoughts. He "snaps" back when a question is posed.)

ALEX (*cont'd*). Well... He continues doing what he's doing and he hits the windshield a couple more times before he slips and falls. They jump all over him and he's yelling louder and louder and he screams, "I hate them... All of them! It's not fair! It's not my fault!!!" (*Beat; reflecting.*) It was sad. The police cars drove up and Jerome was sitting on the curb with his head in his hands and he kept crying and crying... Not loud crying. Soft crying. All the

adults were standing around, but none of them were talking to him. Not one word... Nothing. *(Beat; sympathetic.)* He looked all alone.

(Extended beat. ALEX responds to a question.)

ALEX *(cont'd)*. My friend Liz said that kids on the other team were talking trash. They were always making fun of him... Always making his life miserable. I'm surprised he didn't go crazier sooner... You would've thought he would have bullied them... You see, Jerome is a big guy... Really big... I don't understand why anyone would want to pick on him. He's like already six feet tall and over two hundred pounds and he's older than all of the kids in school because he was held back a couple of times... Made people think he was stupid... He reminded me of this character named Lenny in that book *Of Mice and Men*. You ever read it? *(Beat; responding.)* I didn't really talk to him. I mean, I didn't have anything against him. I'd say "hi" to him in the mornings or "bye" to him when school let out... But, he kept to himself... He didn't have any friends... Not sure he wanted any.

(Extended beat. ALEX responds to a question.)

ALEX *(cont'd)*. Yeah... I felt sorry for him. Nobody deserves to be treated that way. One time... *(Beat.)* One time they even cornered him in the locker room and held him on the ground and they ripped his shirt. They kept punching and squeezing him, like...

(ALEX pauses, then mimics breasts being squeezed; embarrassed.)

ALEX (*cont'd*). You know... They said he had boobs...
Like a girl.

(Extended beat. ALEX responds to a question.)

ALEX (*cont'd*). Yeah...we have a lot of them at school. They think they're all that and they act like they own the place... Always talking like in the movies. (*Demonstrating.*) "Yo, homie. You best be giving me my respect." Ignorant stuff like that. They want to act all gangster. They mess with the kids who aren't as popular as they are and they punk them in different ways. They're always menacing them if they don't do certain things they want and they'll have their friends jump them... But they always get away with it. Even with the security guys walking around... And, the teachers try and help, but they do the stuff when the teachers aren't looking, and by the time the teachers come back, well... The damage has already been done. (*Beat; annoyed.*) These bullies play with their heads more than anything else. I think that's worse, and the older kids...they punk on smaller kids that can't defend themselves. It's easy pickings... But it's the worst for kids like Jerome; the ones who have weight problems. If someone walks in from another classroom and if they're a little chunky you could hear kids cracking jokes. Kids will whisper and point and start laughing. It usually starts off with fat jokes like "you so fat, your blood type is maple syrup" or something lame like that... But it doesn't take long before it gets really vicious to the point where kids can't take it anymore. (*Beat.*) The worst thing to be in our school is...fat. If you're fat, you're the first target... The biggest target.

(Extended beat. ALEX sits down and fidgets in his seat.)

ALEX (*cont'd*). Sometimes they mess with kids with the race thing, too. You hear the N-word all the time... Or they'll pick on you if you're Mexican. (*Beat.*) They make fun of Marshall because he lives in a trailer park. They're always calling him a redneck or trailer trash and they make fun of his clothes... But you know what? Marshall's going to get the last laugh. You know how smart he is. He's going to be the successful one, not them. (*Beat; seething.*) I get sick of them... The Mess With Me types. They're like, "If you mess with me, I'll mess with you," but no one ever messes with them. That's the point. They always start it... But nothing is done about it; at least, not to them. The ones who get busted are usually the kids who fight back. They get caught throwing punches. It's the innocent kids who get suspended... The ones who get expelled.

(*Extended beat. ALEX points at the television set.*)

ALEX (*cont'd*). I hear about bullying on the news all the time. You hear stories about kids being bullied because they're gay, or they show stuff about sexting and how it spreads so fast and so quick!

(*ALEX is interrupted. Beat; responding, annoyed.*)

ALEX (*cont'd*). Yeah, yeah, yeah... I'm not a little kid anymore, I know what it is. (*Beat.*) But, sometimes the bullying from (*air quotes*) "the females" is even worse... Like *Girls Gone Wild*... They like to spread rumors like wildfire. For example, there was this one girl at my school who was pregnant already, but she had a miscarriage or something. They always gossiped about her and spread these terrible lies about her and her family...

They said it was her fault that the baby died. How jacked-up is that? (*Beat; irked.*) It's like they don't have anything better to do... I even heard about this one story on the *Oprah Show* about how this one girl's mom was messing with another girl that her daughter was fighting with... She went cyber-bully on her all over the Internet. She was texting this other girl and pretending to be a cute boy, so the girl falls in love with the boy who doesn't even exist. The mom stops texting the other girl, and the other girl gets so sad that she kills herself? (*Beat; confused.*) Why would a mother do that? She's supposed to be the adult.

(*Extended beat.*)

ALEX (*cont'd*). It makes me not want to watch TV anymore. It's so depressing. (*Beat.*) It's like these jerks really-really-really want to hurt you, so when it gets to that point you need to talk to someone...or just walk away, it's not worth it anymore...it's frustrating when kids don't get help because you want to get involved... But it's not really your place to because... (*Beat.*) It's not like my battle to fight for them. (*Beat; standing up.*) People who bully people want to see you cry. I think they've been bullied. I think they struggle at home with their own problems. They feel like if they harass somebody else, that will make them feel better about themselves... Then, you have those bullies who cause drama just for the fun of it... They just have no heart. (*Beat.*) That's why I like *Bully Beatdown*. Have you seen it? (*Beat; excited.*) Oh, man... You have to step into the twenty-first century... You don't know what you're missing... It's the best show on MTV!

(ALEX begins to mimic an MMA fighter move.)

ALEX *(cont'd)*. I love Mayhem. He's the host... He's this professional MMA fighter, so you can tell he can be a bully if he wanted to, but he doesn't. He's nice and he's funny and he helps the people who can't defend themselves. *(Amused.)* The bullies try to act all hard like it's not a big deal. They talk and talk about what they're going to do against their opponents in the cage, but it only takes them a couple of seconds before they realize they're dead meat... I love seeing the bullies when they get beat up. I like how the bully gets what he deserves... And sometimes the bullies still stay bullies. They don't learn anything...even after getting their butts kicked. *(Beat; content.)* For me, though...the best part is when a bully shakes hands with his victims. You can see it on their faces. They know they were wrong... I like that it's not really revenge. It's just them being taught a lesson... That's all.

(Extended beat. ALEX responds to a question.)

ALEX *(cont'd)*. I don't know.

(Extended beat.)

ALEX *(cont'd)*. No... Not really... I don't see it getting any better. *(Beat; pessimistic.)* It's not right... Kids hurting other kids... Because it hurts them inside and it messes them up for the course of their lives... People forget that kids who get bullied become adults... Adults who never grow up from that... They still have that scar in their lives. I don't get it... Why bother messing with people who never did anything to you? Why bully someone else

when you can live a good life? *(Beat; pensive.)* You know...I always hear people say “sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” *(Beat; defeated.)* But...I know that expression doesn't work.

(Extended beat. ALEX hears a question but doesn't respond; beat. He looks down to the ground.)

ALEX *(cont'd)*. Me?

(Extended beat.)

ALEX *(cont'd, quietly)*. I don't want to talk about it, Dad.

(Extended beat.)

ALEX *(cont'd, sadly whispering)*. It's...nothing.

END OF PLAY

Beasts

By Ernie Nolan

CHARACTERS

THESEUS a small boy age 12 to 16
ASTERION a Minotaur
YANNIS a Minotaur
ANTONIA a female Minotaur
GEORGE a boy age 12 to 16
GEORGE II a boy age 12 to 16
GEORGIA a girl age 12 to 16
POLYPHEMUS a Cyclops

SETTING AND TIME: An elaborate and foreboding labyrinth in ancient Greece.

(DARKNESS. The air is sticky and foggy. Offstage, the voice of a young man is heard echoing through the chambers of a labyrinth.)

THESEUS (*offstage*). Beast? Beast come out from hiding!

(THESEUS, a small young man, tentatively enters, holding a ball of gold string, which continues offstage, and an enormous sword.)

THESEUS (*cont'd*). I know you're somewhere near, beast!

(A SOUND, which sounds like a howl and a yawn, is heard. THESEUS jumps.)

THESEUS (*cont'd*). Show yourself!

(The yawn/howl SOUND is heard again. THESEUS readies his sword.)

THESEUS (*cont'd*). If you know what's good for you. I won't ask for you to appear again.

(The SOUND of giant hooves on stone comes nearer and nearer. THESEUS swallows and tries to stand bravely. Enter ASTERION, a Minotaur. There is a silent stare-down between the two, and then...)

THESEUS (*cont'd*). Beast, prepare to cross the river Styx, 'cause Hades awaits! *(He lifts his giant sword. Beat.)*

ASTERION. You have got to be kidding me. I woke up from a nap for this?

(ASTERION turns and exits. THESEUS stands there, dumbfounded.)

THESEUS. Beast?... Beast?... Where are you going?

ASTERION (*offstage*). Anywhere I don't have to deal with you.

THESEUS. But...but you... You have to return!

ASTERION. Why?

THESEUS. Because I command you to!

ASTERION. You what?

THESEUS. I'm a prince, and you have to do what I say.

ASTERION. Says who?

THESEUS. My dad.

ASTERION. He can jump into the sea for all I care!

THESEUS. Can't you come out here so we can settle this like men?

ASTERION. Men? I'm half bull and you're a boy.

THESEUS. Am not!

ASTERION. Are too!

THESEUS. Am not!

ASTERION. Are too!

THESEUS. OK...you might have a point. I am on the young-ish side.

ASTERION. "Ish"? I know goats older than you.

THESEUS. Can't you just...

ASTERION. No! Go away! I'm done dealing with you, runt!

THESEUS. But...

ASTERION. Head back to whatever acropolis you came from...

THESEUS. But...

ASTERION. What? Is this all Greek to you? Gooooooooooooo!

(The SOUND of ASTERION's "Goooo!" echoes through the chamber. THESEUS stands, confused; he definitely planned this to go differently. He tries to fight back tears, but alas, they get the better of him. He drops his sword, falls to his knees and begins to cry. A moment later, we hear from offstage...)

ASTERION *(cont'd)*. Little annoying intruder? *(THESEUS cries more.)* Little annoying intruder, are you OK? *(THESEUS cries even more.)* Did you fall or something? *(He enters.)* Hey...you all right?

THESEUS. Do I look all right?