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Film Review: Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History

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**Film Review: *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History*
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The film *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History* (Brummel & Sharp 2010) is the true life story of Jamie Nabozny. The film documents the bullying that Jamie endured for years. *Bullied* is a free resource provided by the Southern Poverty Law Center and their anti-bias education project, Teaching Tolerance, available for order at www.tolerance.org. Narration of the movie is done by Jane Lynch; well known for her role as the narcissistic cheerleading coach on *Glee*. Lynch's uncharacteristically somber tone, only serves to punctuate the seriousness of the movie's topic.

Firsthand accounts from Jamie and his mother allow viewers to glimpse the humiliation and emotional pain that Jamie experienced, not only at the hands of the bullies, but also as a result of the detachment of the school administrators in Jamie's Wisconsin schools. The movie recounts one example of his principal, Mary Podlesny, telling Jamie and his mother "that if Jamie was going to act so openly gay he had to expect this stuff to happen to him." In desperation Jamie attempted suicide several times, dropped out of school, and eventually ran away.

After years of mistreatment at the hands of bullies, written off by school officials as "boys being boys," Jamie decided to do something about the abuse and filed the landmark LGBTQ court case *Nabozny v. Podlesny*. Jamie's efforts were described by Lambda legal as having "electrified the nation's education community and led to an explosion in legal advocacy for LGBTQ youth" (Lambda Legal: *Nabozny v. Podlesny*). Jamie's case was eventually settled out of court with financial settlements equaling nearly one million dollars. The case became the federal precedent that clarified the constitutional obligation of school systems to protect gay students from abuse and bullying (Lambda Legal: *Nabozny v. Podlesny*).

Included with the 40 minute documentary is a two-part viewing guide, lesson plans, and activities that are designed to help bring about change and tolerance. The first half of the viewing guide provides quizzes, questions, and facts that can be shared with the audience before and after viewing the movie. As a resource, *Bullied* and its viewing guide invites the facilitator to lead students through a variety of discussions. The lessons address the harassment of the LGBTQ students, but also include comprehensive conversations on all forms of bullying. Once students engage in dialogue about bullying, transitions can be made to include discussions about bystander behavior, personal safety, cyber bullying, and hazing.

The second half of the viewing guide is designed for middle school and high school teachers that want to bring about change in their school's policies and faculties' attitudes and skills. However, small changes to the verbiage of the guide would allow the resources and action steps to be applied to college faculty, administrators, and staff who would like to bring about similar change to their college community. This portion of the resource guide could also be used to train fraternity and sorority leaders that feel that their communities could do more to combat bullying in all its forms.

References

Brummel, B. (Producer and Director), & Sharp, G. (Director). (2010). *Bullied: A student, a school, and a case that made history* [DVD]. Available from <http://www.tolerance.org/bullied>

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