



# Chicago Mayoral Candidates Talk About Bullying

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Chicago - Three of the four main candidates for Chicago mayor told CPS students on Monday that they'd been bullied when they were kids.

Rahm Emanuel said bullies using racial epithets beat him up and stole his bicycle in leafy North Shore Wilmette. On the South Side, Carol Moseley Braun said a much bigger girl at her elementary school "would beat me up...just pick on me and pick on me."

Gery Chico, a former student athlete who says he was not targeted, nonetheless had to rescue his younger brother from bullies.



When this crop of mayoral candidates was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, school bullies were largely regarded as just another, albeit unpleasant, fact of life. It's very different today. Physical and verbal bullying – by both girls and boys -- is now a top concern of educational foundations, school administrators and parents. Some experts claim bullying leaves lifelong psychological scars even in the healthy, not to mention brooding sociopaths.

The issue arose at a mayoral candidates' forum broadcast by WTTW-TV, Ch. 11. All the questioners were local high school students identified by the Mikva Challenge, a not-for-profit group promoting political involvement by young people.

A female student asked what the candidates could or would do to reduce bullying based on sexual orientation. That provoked a broader discussion of bullying, including the sometimes ugly childhood experiences of the candidates themselves.

Meeting with reporters after the forum, Emanuel said his family "used to go to Israel all the time. I get quite dark (from being out in the sun.) We moved up to the suburbs in 1968-1969. And the kids said some things on a racial basis, based on because we'd just gotten back from Israel. And they took my bike away. The good news, for me, while they took my bike away and said some things, I also had a younger brother who was bigger."

While he seemed to imply that his brother had administered some street justice to those who stole his bike, Emanuel declined to elaborate. A request to a campaign spokesman for more information had not received a reply Monday evening.

“There was a girl at my grammar school who would beat me up, until I got her,” Moseley Braun said. “You know, I was smaller than most kids in my class. And she would just pick on me and just pick on me. And one day, I just went kind of berserk. (laughter) She didn’t pick on me any more.”

Adolescent street justice was applied by Chico, as well. He told reporters that in his “tough neighborhood” the answer to bullying was to “win one or two fights. After that they didn’t bother you any more.” Chico said he was never personally victimized. But his younger brother was. Chico said he once came upon a bully who was pounding his brother into submission.

“I was in 8th grade. The toughest kid in the school was on my brother’s back. I saw this from about a block away. And I went running. And I caught this kid. And I knocked him out. Not cold, you know. But I mean, I knocked him out because he was on my brother’s back. And you know what? If you do that a couple times, nobody messes with you. I mean that is just the way I was brought up,” Chico said.

City Clerk Miguel Del Valle recounted his experience as one of the first Puerto Rican students at the otherwise then-all-white Talcott Elementary. In 7th and 8th grade, Del Valle said he repeatedly suffered “a very physical pounding.”

“I ended up with a lot of bruises,” he said. “My brothers got it, too.” Del Valle said he used to sneak out of Talcott via the school boiler room and a back door to avoid the bullies.