

# *Beasting: The Hidden Epidemic*

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“BEASTING” is a word used by the Brits to describe harassment and peer-torment. We know it as bullying. As educators you know what a problem this is in schools. If you are as busy as I, however, I wonder who among us has had the time and energy to consider the extent of the damage cause by Beasting.

My daughter, a teacher in Springfield, MA, brought this to my attention. She told me that last school year, a 9<sup>th</sup> grade boy walked home from school, went into his closet, stood on a chair and hung himself with his own belt. He was being cruelly Beasted at school and could simply bear the torment no longer.

The parents, who found him, also suffered, as did his brothers and sisters. His neighbors, relatives, and other school children suffered. The Beasters, however, as is typically the case, we able to escape detection beneath the thick cloud of grieving.

There is evidence that the VA Tech massacre involved Beasting. It was declared that the boy was mentally unstable – naturally. It was not emphasized, however, that he was relentlessly ridiculed because of a speech impediment: publically humiliated. Over thirty students were murdered. The point: A single Beaster can cause enormous, wide-spread suffering.

Quite by accident I learned recently of a man who holds a position of great respect and responsibility in the community. Somehow a file of documents regarding him was delivered to the wrong person, who read through the file to determine where to forward it. The file contained information about the man’s personal life that totally contradicted his behavior among others. The man was on the verge of “going postal,” as it were - and no one had a clue.

The VA Tech shooter was deemed mentally unstable. How many people do you meet every day – students, colleagues, neighbors – whose ‘mental instability’ may have reached the breaking point, but who appear absolutely normal to you and others?

My reason for writing is that I have been compelled to gather evidence regarding the Nidal Hasan incident in Texas. I suspected that Beasting might have been involved and submitted a piece to the NYTimes to that effect. Surprisingly, it was chosen as an “editor’s selection” – out of 196 submissions.

<http://community.nytimes.com/comments/www.nytimes.com/2009/11/11/us/11hood.html?sort=editors-selection>

I am acutely aware of the suffering caused by Hasan. Again, however, it appears that the Beaster, shielded by intense grief, managed to escape detection. This appears to be the rule concerning such incidents. Perhaps it is time to pause, and rather than becoming distracted by the immediate pain and loss, to search a bit deeper.

The more information I gather on the life of Nidal Hasan, the clearer it becomes that he was not mentally unstable (he was a trained psychiatrist) and that he was anything but an Islamic terrorist. On the contrary, all evidence seems to suggest that Nidal, born and raised an American kid in greater Washington DC, was a very kind, compassionate and worshipful man.

It was not until he moved from Walter Reed hospital to Fort Hood, TX – only 4 ½ months ago – that he began having problems. He reported being Beasted because of his religion. His car, which had a bumper sticker - Allah is love - was vandalized by a GI to the degree that it had to be replaced. When his shocked neighbors asked what his was going to do, he replied, “I am going to forgive the man, just as I have been taught.”

Nidal is a bright young man. Even so, he chose to enter the Army out of a sense of responsibility to country. I don't know many American kids like that, do you?

Nidal did everything right. But 4 ½ months ago, he moved to a place where he found himself surrounded by two types of people: 1) those who were in ‘mental preparation’ to go kill and be killed by Muslim extremists, and 2) war-hardened GIs who had just returned from the battlefield where they had killed and been killed by Muslim extremists. These were the ‘colleagues’ who claimed that he was Psychotic. However, those same colleagues would have been the ones responsible for any acts of Beasting.

As I reflected on this, an image came to mind: Tough, war-hardened GIs, pulling a terrified young Muslim aside, and saying, “I despise your kind and your religion. We are going to the battlefield and when we get there YOU are going to be the first filthy rag head I get. Think your religion can save you?. Before we finish with you, you'll beg us to kill you.”

Am I exaggerating? Do you know someone who has been bullied like this? I do. And it broke my heart to see it happening. But being terrified of retaliation, I kept silent. The Beaster, of course, went free; the victim was publically beaten over and again, mercilessly. I've seen it happen more than once.

This kind of mental torture has the capacity to reduce a cognizant human being to a mindless animal, whose only concern becomes self preservation. Those in the field of neurology can expand on this.

The brain effectively shuts down, superseded by the most powerful, involuntary instinct we humans possess: the survive/thrive impulse.

Now, I am going to risk isolating ½ of you by what I say next. I support but I believe in capital punishment. I believe that there are situations worse than death and I am a person of faith. That said, if asked to pull the switch that would end Hasan's life I could do so in a clear conscience. I would weep out of compassion, but I would do what I believe to be right for all.

I also believe that there is a crime even more egregious and insidious than Hasan's. Beasting continues to be a problem in schools, and is perhaps even a factor in the current 30% dropout rate among American kids. But Beasting is also a serious problem in the workplace. Why? The root cause, real criminal, always manages to escape detection. As a result, our dictionaries have a new term: "going postal." Notice the term itself ascribes the entirety of blame to the one deemed 'psychotic.'

I ask your support in digging a few inches deeper, to uncover the hidden aspect of this story. For we may have an opportunity, not to excuse a killers actions, but to finally bring to light a deadly and gruesome epidemic that, like a virus, has found a safe haven deep beneath the agonizing cries of sorrow. But it will emerge to strike again and again unless we do something to prevent it.

Won't you please help stop Beasting – in schools and the work place? Please circulate this message among your peers. Let's keep this issue alive, as educators, parents, and concerned citizens, and see what good can come from it. This morning I asked the investigative journalists of the Washington Post to become involved.

I do not want to come home one day and find my grandson hanging in the closet, and neither do you. Let's make this a priority while the opportunity permits.

I can be reached: [Jon@ForAmericanKids.org](mailto:Jon@ForAmericanKids.org) Feel free to contact me regarding information and questions.

Compassionately,



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