Every day we are presented with some sort of opportunity. We decide how we will make an impact on the world because of the opportunity. One may think that remaining passive, staying along the sidelines, and keeping quiet will isolate himself from impacting anyone, when in reality it is the exact opposite. Everyone has a voice, and whether we choose to make that voice heard or not will affect our impact on the world.

In *Full Body Burden*, the author, Kristen Iversen, states at the end of the book, “To speak out or to remain silent is the first and most crucial decision we can make.” This quote applies not only to myself, but I’m sure to many people today. Too often do I find people who are afraid to speak their mind. Rather than being concerned about what they want to say, they are more worried about what others want to hear.

Bullying is an example of how refusing to speak out can hurt society. Bullying is a common problem found throughout the school system and it continues to be a problem because not enough people speak out against it. From elementary school to middle school I have witnessed and have been victimized by bullying. Seeing others stand by and just watch you get publicly criticized is not the best feeling in the world. People like myself are afraid to say anything because they do not want to be on the bully’s bad side. They would rather be a neutral factor so that they do not draw negative attention to themselves. I can think of countless times throughout middle school when I was minding my own business, walking through the halls chatting with a friend on our way to class, when all of a sudden some kid who clearly had nothing better to do would come over to me and make my life hell.
Reflected on Kristen Iversen’s “Full Body Burden: Growing Up in the Nuclear Shadow of Rocky Flats”

He would punch, push, or bring upon any kind of physical harm he could while adding name-calling to the mix. While all of this was going on, my friend would hide in the crowd of spectators, laughing at my abuse so that he would not draw attention to himself.

I am ashamed to say that sometimes the shoe would be on the other foot and I would be the witness to my friends being bullied while hiding in the crowd of spectators. To this day I wish I had stood out of the crowd and said something to the kids who victimized us. Bullies are a problem, but when no one speaks out against the problem, the problem is not recognized and cannot be remedied.

In reading Full Body Burden, the role of the government throughout the Rocky Flats era seemed similar to that of a bully, just on a wider scale.

The government, when involved with Rocky Flats, did not release the full story of risks involving the release of plutonium into the community. They told citizens that they had nothing to worry about, that they would not be hurt by the radiation and plutonium. Clearly, by the end of the book we realize that they were wrong and that people were hurt by it. The common thought by local citizens surrounding Rocky Flats was that if they were truly in danger the government would tell them. The community relied on the government for its safety, and because the residents did not think they were in any danger there was not a lot of protest toward Rocky Flats.

There were a few select groups, however, that believed their health was at risk and they stood out and protested against Rocky Flats. It took many years and many arrests before their voices were heard. For thirty years, groups protested Rocky Flats from the inside out and were constantly silenced by the government, but that did not stop them.

The key moment in their success was the group organized by Sister Pam Solo, Sister Pat McCormick and Judy Danielson that went door-to-door in neighborhoods near Rocky Flats asking for soil samples that would be tested for radiation. Statements released by government officials involved with Rocky Flats at first stated that these tests were not accurate, but further studies showed that they were and that the government had lied. These tests would later be a key factor during the trial of Rocky Flats that would lead to the closing of the plant. These small groups of people were able to have such a large impact on something that was destroying their environment.
In my circumstance, these protestors were the kids who stood up to the bully. It is true, there is power in numbers, but even if it is just one person a difference can still be made. I now do not hesitate to make myself heard. I might be just one person, but I know I will not speak alone.

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