

08.21.11 > BOSTON UNCOMMON



FIRST PERSON

Bully Pulpit

In her new anthology, Swampscott author Megan Kelley Hall, 37, has a message for bullies — and bystanders.

You and your co-editor, Carrie Jones, organized a group of authors to write essays about bullying in your new book, *Dear Bully*. Why? I was so angry about what happened to Phoebe Prince [the Massachusetts teen who took her life after a spate of bullying]. I was ready to post the accused bullies' pictures and names, and my sister said, "Maybe you should channel this into something more positive." So [Carrie

and I] created the Young Adult Authors Against Bullying [Facebook page]. It spread like wildfire; it went from five members to 1,500 in a weekend. We got all these well-known authors saying, "Tell me what to do and we'll do it."

> **A few spoke from the perspective of being a bully. Was it difficult for them to admit?** I think it was their way of apologizing for the way they acted.
> **You included an essay**

about your own experience. Yes. I was bullied by in college. It was a difficult time. People assume people get bullied when they are younger, but it can go all the way to adulthood. People say, "I get bullied at work, in mommy groups, and places you wouldn't expect." By adulthood, you are more equipped to handle it. And, actually, there are more protections in place for an adult than a child, which is horrifying,

if you think about it.

> **What has been one of your more frustrating moments?** A lot of the bullying I witnessed growing up found its way into my first two novels. I would go to signings and say to teens, "I hope you never meet girls as mean as the ones in my books." And a lot of them said, "We already have."

> **Even with new anti-bullying laws, what can you say to kids that can help?**

When I go to schools, I say, "I'm not talking to the bully, because nothing is going to change who you are. I'm not talking to the victim; you're going through enough. I am talking to the bystanders." They have all the power [to] make the change — [by] not giving a bully the audience it needs.

— Sarah Schweitzer

Globe Magazine assistant editor Melissa Schorr is among the book's essayists.