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## Turning Kids into Sex Offenders

By [John Stossel](#)

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Imagine how DeMarcus Blackwell felt when he was told that his son Chris had engaged in "sexual contact and/or sexual harassment" at school. School officials in Waco, Texas, said Chris rubbed his face in the chest of a female teachers' aide.

Well, before you can imagine this father's reaction, you need to know one other fact: His son was 4 years old when the "sexual" incident occurred.

What got Chris into trouble was giving the aide a hug. Only after DeMarcus strenuously complained did the school change the boy's record from "sexual harassment" to "inappropriate physical contact."

At least Chris wasn't sent to jail, as were 13-year-old Cory Mashburn and 12-year-old Ryan Cornelison of McMinnville, Ore. The boys were charged with five counts of felony sex abuse in the first degree because of their conduct toward some 13-year-old girls at their middle school.

Cory's mom, Tracie, got the terrible phone call. "He had been touching some girls, and we needed to get down to the juvenile detention. They were arresting him," she told me.

Police officer Marshall Roache read the boys their Miranda rights. "Then he asked me if I understood them, but I didn't," Cory told me. "I thought you had to say yes. So I said yes."

What had the boys done?

"It was just a game," Cory said. "You'd slap somebody, they'd slap another person, you got slapped, and you slapped somebody else."

The "victims" of the felony sex abuse don't consider themselves victims. "Every Friday, we would have Slap Butt Day, and pretty much we would just go around slapping people's butts," said Megan Looney, one of the girls involved.

Officer Roache also claimed that the boys "dry humped" the girls. But the girls say all the boys did was "party boy": "It's just like a really funny dance," said Madie, another of the girls. "All the boys do it. They, like, bounce up and down, and it's really funny because they look really retarded."

The boys didn't touch the girls when "party boy" dancing, but Officer Roache still called it dry humping in his police report.

Madie said that missed the mark. "They don't think of it as, like, they're trying to hump us or something. They're just like trying to act stupid.

"We don't think they should be punished for it."

But punished they were. The boys were locked up for *six* days. The police "pushed us up against the wall. ... They strip-searched us and then they put us in our cells," Cory told me. Ryan added: "Every time a lawyer, somebody, came to talk to us, we had to get strip-searched afterwards." He said this happened six or seven times.

The first night, their parents waited at the jail but couldn't see them or even talk to them on the phone. They didn't get to see their boys until two days later.

That's jail policy, the district attorney told their lawyer. No communications until visiting day.

After six days in jail, the boys were released but banned from school and from seeing many of their friends. The district attorney, who wouldn't talk to "20/20," demanded a trial. It took half a year before a judge would finally hear a motion to dismiss charges.

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By that time, all the girls had signed affidavits saying they didn't think the boys should be prosecuted. The charges were dropped.

The district attorney says she'd do it again because she did nothing wrong.

Give me a break.

Genuine sexual harassment is nasty, but it's also nasty when politically correct prosecutors and timid lawsuit-fearing school administrators jail kids for small infractions.

"There's been a disturbing increase in the trend of arresting children for minor infractions that often would have been taken care of ... by simply calling in the parent," says Jakada Imani of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. "Criminalizing our young people at younger and younger ages ... has to be deeply troubling for anybody concerned about this country's future."

Adults should take a course in common sense before they upset more kids' lives over things like a hug or a silly game.

*John Stossel is an award-winning news correspondent and author of [Myths, Lies, and Downright Stupidity: Get Out the Shovel--Why Everything You Know is Wrong](#).*

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