



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on May 21, 2012

N.C. Teacher Tells Student It's a Criminal Offense to Criticize Obama

A [YouTube video](#) (watch at bottom of article) wherein a schoolteacher in a North Carolina public school tells a student that disrespecting President Obama is a criminal offense went viral after being uploaded early last week. First reported by the [Salisbury Post](#), the classroom controversy ignited during a classroom discussion about a *Washington Post* article that targeted GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney for purportedly bullying a kid nearly five decades ago.



The teacher became agitated after a junior in a North Rowan High School questioned his teacher, one Tanya Dixon-Neely, about an incident where the President admitted to bullying a former classmate. "Didn't Obama bully someone though?" the student asked. Dixon-Neely responded, "Not to my knowledge."

The student was referring to an excerpt in Obama's biography, *Dreams from My Father*, where the President acknowledges that he bullied and shoved a little girl during his grade school years. The excerpt [reads](#):

There was one other child in my class, though, who reminded me of a different sort of pain. Her name was Coretta, and before my arrival she had been the only black person in our grade. She was plump and dark and didn't seem to have many friends. From the first day, we avoided each other but watched from a distance, as if direct contact would only remind us more keenly of our isolation.

Finally, during recess one hot, cloudless day, we found ourselves occupying the same corner of the playground. I don't remember what we said to each other, but I remember that suddenly she was chasing me around the jungle gym and swings. She was laughing brightly, and I teased her and dodged this way and that, until she finally caught me and we fell to the ground breathless. When I looked up, I saw a group of children, faceless before the glare of the sun, pointing down at us.

"Coretta has a boyfriend! Coretta has a boyfriend!"

The chants grew louder as a few more kids circled us.

"She's not my g-girlfriend," I stammered. I looked to Coretta for some assistance, but she just stood there looking down at the ground. "Coretta's got a boyfriend! Why don't you kiss her, mister boyfriend?"

"I'm not her boyfriend!" I shouted. I ran up to Coretta and gave her a slight shove; she staggered back and looked up at me, but still said nothing. "Leave me alone!" I shouted again. And suddenly Coretta was running, faster and faster, until she disappeared from sight. Appreciative laughs rose around me. Then the bell rang, and the teachers appeared to round us back into class.

The teacher added vehemently, "Stop, no, because there is no comparison." Romney, Dixon-Nelly



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charged, is “running for President. Obama is the President.”

After the student argued that both are “just men,” the teacher went on to contend that Romney, being only a candidate for President, is not entitled to the same respect that Obama is entitled to. “Listen, let me tell you something,” she warned, “you will not disrespect the President of the United States in this classroom.”

After the student asserted that he would say whatever he wants, Dixon-Neely responded, “Not about him you won’t.”

Later in the argument, the teacher said it’s a criminal offense to slander the President of the United States. “Do you realize that people were arrested for saying things bad about Bush?” she said of former President George W. Bush. “Do you realize you are not supposed to slander the president?”

The student rightfully suggested that being arrested for expressing negative opinions about the President would violate his First Amendment right to freedom of speech. “You would have to say some pretty f***d up crap about him to be arrested,” he affirmed. “They cannot take away your right to have your opinion.... They can’t take that away unless you threaten the president.”

Michael Blitzer, a political analyst and a professor at Catawba College, confirmed that Dixon-Neely’s assertion — that expressing negative, non-threatening opinions about the President is a criminal offense — directly impedes on the U.S. Constitution. “Her point about not being able to say anything ‘disrespectful’ about the president does fly in the face of the First Amendment, and while she may wish to enforce that edict about ‘respecting’ the president, the issue seems to have gotten personal on her part,” Blitzer wrote in an e-mail to the *Salisbury Post*.

Rowan-Salisbury spokeswoman Rita Foil said Dixon-Neely is still employed with the school district and has been suspended for disciplinary reasons. “The Rowan-Salisbury School System expects all students and employees to be respectful in the school environment and for all teachers to maintain their professionalism in the classroom,” Foil wrote in an e-mail to the *Salisbury Post*. “This incident should serve as an education for all teachers to stop and reflect on their interaction with students. Due to personnel and student confidentiality, we cannot discuss the matter publicly.”

A source [told](#) Breitbart News that a friend of the student agreed to record the conversation to “prove to his parents what he has been trying to tell them for some time. The teacher in this video has a long history of pushing a liberal agenda, by shouting down students. She is very intolerant of other points of view that she does not share. The atmosphere at this school is not very conducive to opposing views.”

The source added, “The student’s parents have since taken him out of school and had him registered at another nearby school.”



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