

# Scars You Can't See: Stand For The Silent on Why Even Champions Aren't Bully-Proof

*Beneath every belt is a story - These fighters are breaking their silence to help end bullying for good.*

OKLAHOMA CITY , OK, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When people see martial arts champs and fighting professionals, they assume they are the ones in control and have likely never been bullied. The truth for some, however, paints a very different story. With the stories they tell, it's easy to see that even champions are not immune to being bullied. The [United States Fight League](#) (USFL) has partnered with Stand for the Silent to share their own bullying stories and discuss the ways they are addressing this issue among today's youth.



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“I think that many younger people find it comforting to know that even champion fighters have been bullied and are working to help raise awareness about it,” says Kirk Smalley, co-founder of Stand for the Silent.

Two champion mixed martial arts (MMA) fighters have both been impacted by bullying, including Irann Orozco and Trey Anderson. Orozco was traumatized by bullying starting at the age of 13, when she was sent to a military school. Like many who are victims of bullying, she became

withdrawn and traumatized. She decided to join a mixed martial arts gym, which eventually led to her joining a professional boxing gym as the only female athlete.

When asked why she fights, she replied, “Why do you breathe?”

Becoming a professional fighter was something she felt she had to do, as it gave her the

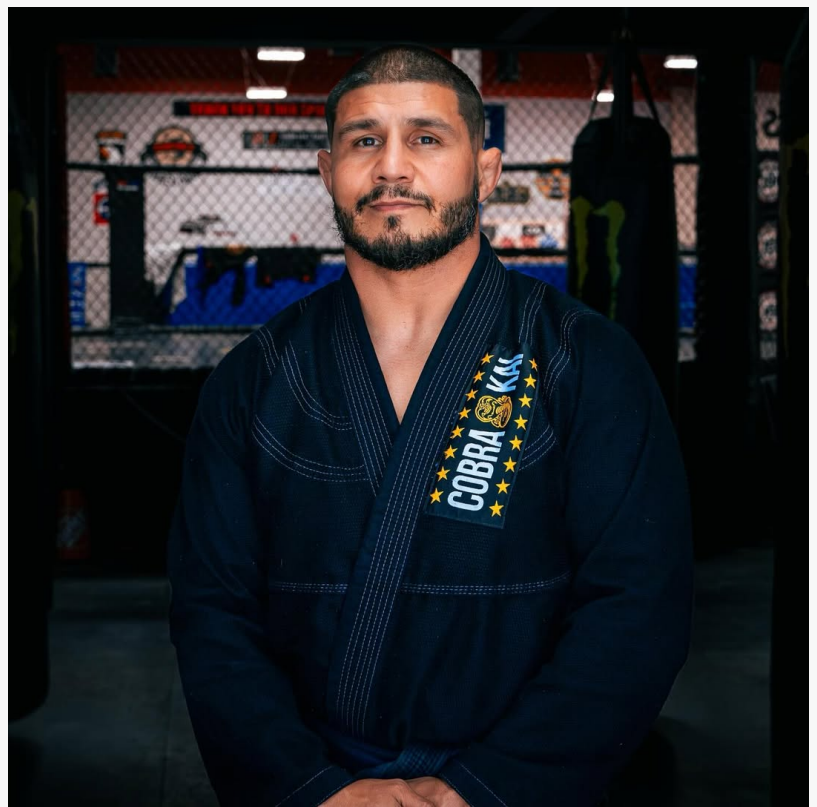
confidence and skills she needed to be no longer traumatized by bullies. Today, she's a world bronze medalist and champion athlete who speaks out about bullying to help others who may be enduring it and to help bring it to an end.

Anderson began learning martial arts at the young age of six, but it didn't protect him from being bullied as he grew up. While he spent years as a target for bullies, he continued to hone his martial arts craft, learning how to rise above the bullying and feel confident in his skills. Today, he's a mixed martial arts champion and 5-time ISKA karate world champion who is happy to speak out about bullying to anyone who listens. He also encourages today's youth to take up martial arts as a way to cope with bullying.

"It was an escape but also helped me project confidence," says Anderson. "If you know you can keep yourself safe, you don't come off as a target."

MMA has others who speak out against bullying, too, including Joe Stevenson, the president of the USFL, and Randy Couture, a six-time UFC champion and one of the most decorated fighters in MMA history, is still active in the MMA community, owns a professional gym, and was a commentator on ESPN for the Professional Fighters League. Couture experienced his own bullying incidents in the 7th grade and remembers how damaging they can be.

"I hate bullying and believe that MMA helps people become more confident and have the tools they need to defend themselves if the time were to come," says Couture. "We believe that when people have the skills to defend themselves, they will reduce their risks of being a target of



Joe Stevenson, the president of the USFL



Randy Couture, a six-time UFC champion and one of the most decorated fighters in MMA history

bullies."

Couture advises young people that the last thing a bully wants is for the person to stand up to them. Once a person has the courage to stand up for themselves, the bully generally backs down. Bullies are usually masking their own insecurities, and when the person being bullied stands up to them it exposes them. While bullying has been around for many years, he reminds people how it has become even a bigger issue with today's technology, especially with social media usage. He shares this advice and more in a [video](#) to help people with the issue.

As the new school year gets underway, Couture has some words of wisdom regarding bullying, which includes:

1. Remembering that Words Leave Scars—How emotional bullying can leave deeper, longer-lasting wounds than physical harm.
2. Using Confidence Is Your Shield—The role of self-confidence—and how martial arts helped build it—in standing up to bullying.
3. Talking to the School Isn't Easy— His experience advocating for his son and the challenges of getting schools to act.
4. Stand Up—for Yourself or Someone Else—Why it's vital to speak up—for yourself or those who can't—and set boundaries with bullies.
5. Schools Need to Look Deeper—The need for schools to show empathy, understand root causes, and help kids in crisis.

Stand for the Silent and USFL are seeking additional corporate sponsors to work with. In doing so, it provides corporate sponsors the opportunity to share their stories and advocacy regarding bullying and to help address it with schools and communities nationwide. It provides an opportunity for corporations to join a national movement to end bullying with two-mission driven nonprofits. The partnership will help deliver anti-bullying programs to schools nationwide, include fighter public service announcements that reach millions using social media, college scholarships for those fighting bullying, and high-profile campaign visibility at MMA events. Partnerships start at \$2,500 and offer various levels of commitment. More information about sponsorships can be found [online](#).

The USFL is the organization responsible for organizing and developing America's international MMA teams and the authority of amateur MMA in international competition.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over 19% of students ages 12-18 have been bullied nationwide. Over 15% of those bullied report that it was by a student who was perceived as more powerful than they are. The prevalence of bullying is higher in middle school than in high school.

Stand for the Silent travels the country, delivering presentations about bullying to schools, providing bullying prevention resources, offering scholarships, and providing intervention

strategies. Those interested in getting involved can start a chapter of the group in their area, obtain a free K-2 bullying prevention curriculum or a cyberbullying handbook for parents, host a presentation at their school, introduce the 'How It All Started' video, and donate to help support the cause. To get more information, visit the site at: <https://standforthesilent.org/>

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