

Indoctrination, Intimidation and Intolerance: What Passes for Education Today

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"Every day in communities across the United States, children and adolescents spend the majority of their waking hours in schools that have increasingly come to [resemble places of detention](#) more than places of learning."—Investigative journalist Annette Fuentes

This is what it means to go back-to-school in America today.

Instead of being taught the three R's of education (reading, writing and arithmetic), young people are being drilled in the three I's of life in the American police state: indoctrination, intimidation and intolerance.

Indeed, while young people today are learning first-hand what it means to be at the epicenter of [politically charged culture wars](#), test scores indicate that [students are not learning how to succeed in social studies, math and reading](#).

Instead of raising up a generation of civic-minded citizens with critical thinking skills, government officials are churning out compliant drones who know little to nothing about their history or their freedoms.

Under the direction of government officials focused on making the schools more authoritarian (sold to parents as a bid to make the schools safer), young people in America are now first in line to be searched, surveilled, spied on, threatened, tied up, locked down, treated like criminals for non-criminal behavior, tasered and in some cases shot.

From the moment a child enters [one of the nation's 98,000 public schools](#) to the moment he or she graduates, they will be exposed to a steady diet of:

- draconian zero tolerance policies that criminalize childish behavior,
- overreaching anti-bullying statutes that criminalize speech,
- school resource officers (police) tasked with disciplining and/or arresting so-

- called “disorderly” students,
- standardized testing that emphasizes rote answers over critical thinking,
- politically correct mindsets that teach young people to censor themselves and those around them,
- and extensive biometric and surveillance systems that, coupled with the rest, acclimate young people to a world in which they have no freedom of thought, speech or movement.

This is how you groom young people to march in lockstep with a police state.

As Deborah Cadbury writes for *The Washington Post*, “[Authoritarian rulers have long tried to assert control over the classroom as part of their totalitarian governments.](#)”

In Nazi Germany, the schools became indoctrination centers, breeding grounds for intolerance and compliance.

In the American police state, the schools have become increasingly hostile to those who dare to question or challenge the status quo.

America’s young people have become casualties of a post-9/11 mindset that has transformed the country into a locked-down, militarized, crisis-fueled mockery of a representative government.

Roped into the government’s profit-driven campaign to keep the nation “safe” from drugs, disease, and weapons, America’s schools have transformed themselves into quasi-prisons, complete with surveillance cameras, metal detectors, police patrols, zero tolerance policies, lock downs, drug sniffing dogs, strip searches and active shooter drills.

Students are not only punished for minor transgressions such as playing cops and robbers on the playground, bringing LEGOs to school, or having a food fight, but the punishments have become far more severe, shifting from detention and visits to the principal’s office into misdemeanor tickets, juvenile court, handcuffs, tasers and even prison terms.

Students have been suspended under school zero tolerance policies for bringing to school “look alike substances” such as [oregano](#), [breath mints](#), birth control [pills](#) and [powdered sugar](#).

Look-alike weapons (toy guns—even Lego-sized ones, hand-drawn pictures of guns, [pencils twirled](#) in a “threatening” manner, imaginary bows and arrows, fingers positioned like guns) can also land a student in hot water, in some cases getting them expelled from school or charged with a crime.

Not even good deeds go unpunished.

One 13-year-old was given detention for exposing the school to “liability” by [sharing his lunch](#) with a hungry friend. A third grader was [suspended for shaving her head](#) in sympathy for a friend who had lost her hair to chemotherapy. And then there was the high school senior who was [suspended for saying “bless you”](#) after a fellow classmate sneezed.

Having police in the schools only adds to the danger.

Thanks to a combination of media hype, political pandering and financial incentives, the use of armed police officers (a.k.a. school resource officers) to patrol school hallways has risen dramatically in the years since the Columbine school shooting.

Indeed, the [growing presence of police in the nation's schools](#) is resulting in [greater police "involvement in routine discipline matters"](#) that principals and parents used to address without involvement from law enforcement officers."

Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, these school resource officers have become de facto wardens in elementary, middle and high schools, doling out their own brand of justice to the so-called "criminals" in their midst with the help of [tasers, pepper spray, batons and brute force](#).

In the absence of school-appropriate guidelines, [police are more and more "stepping in to deal with minor rulebreaking"](#): sagging pants, disrespectful comments, brief physical skirmishes. What previously might have resulted in a detention or a visit to the principal's office was replaced with excruciating pain and temporary blindness, often followed by a trip to the courthouse."

Not even the younger, elementary school-aged kids are being spared these "hardening" tactics.

On any given day when school is in session, [kids who "act up" in class are pinned facedown on the floor, locked in dark closets, tied up with straps, bungee cords and duct tape, handcuffed, leg shackled, tasered or otherwise restrained, immobilized or placed in solitary confinement](#) in order to bring them under "control."

In almost every case, these undeniably harsh methods are used to punish kids—some as young as 4 and 5 years old—for simply failing to follow directions or throwing tantrums.

Very rarely do the kids pose any credible danger to themselves or others.

Unbelievably, [these tactics are all legal](#), at least when employed by school officials or school resource officers in the nation's public schools.

This is what happens when you introduce police and police tactics into the schools.

Paradoxically, by the time you add in the lockdowns and active shooter drills, instead of making the schools safer, school officials have succeeded in creating an environment in which [children are so traumatized](#) that they suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, nightmares, anxiety, mistrust of adults in authority, as well as feelings of anger, depression, humiliation, despair and delusion.

For example, a middle school in Washington State went on [lockdown after a student brought a toy gun to class](#). A Boston high school went into [lockdown for four hours after a bullet was discovered in a classroom](#). A North Carolina elementary school locked down and called in police after a [fifth grader reported seeing an unfamiliar man in the school](#) (it turned out to be a parent).

Police officers at a Florida middle school carried out an active shooter drill in an effort to educate students about how to respond in the event of an actual shooting crisis. Two armed [officers, guns loaded and drawn, burst into classrooms, terrorizing the students](#) and placing

the school into lockdown mode.

These police state tactics have not made the schools any safer.

The fallout has been what you'd expect, with the nation's young people treated like hardened criminals: handcuffed, arrested, tasered, tackled and taught the painful lesson that the Constitution (especially the Fourth Amendment) doesn't mean much in the American police state.

So what's the answer, not only for the here-and-now—the children growing up in these quasi-prisons—but for the future of this country?

How do you convince a child who has been routinely handcuffed, shackled, tied down, locked up, and immobilized by government officials—all before he reaches the age of adulthood—that he has any rights at all, let alone the right to challenge wrongdoing, resist oppression and defend himself against injustice?

Most of all, how do you persuade a fellow American that the government works for him when, for most of his young life, he has been incarcerated in an institution that teaches young people to be obedient and compliant citizens who don't talk back, don't question and don't challenge authority?

As we've seen with other issues, any significant reforms will have to start locally and trickle upwards.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), if we want to raise up a generation of freedom fighters who will actually operate with justice, fairness, accountability and equality towards each other and their government, we must start by running the schools like freedom forums.

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