

## 20 YEARS OF SCHOOLING & They start you at \$12

"School is a twelve-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned... It is time that we squarely face the fact that institutional schoolteaching is destructive to children." John Taylor Gatto

John Taylor Gatto died a month before the death of war criminal George H.W. Bush. Gatto was New York State Teacher of the Year twice and in 1991 he resigned. His open letter in the Wall Street Journal began with the following passage: "I've taught public school for 26 years but I just can't do it anymore. For years I asked the local school board and superintendent to let me teach a curriculum that doesn't hurt kids, but they had other fish to fry. So I'm going to quit, I think. I've come slowly to understand what it is I really teach: A curriculum of confusion, class position, arbitrary justice, vulgarity, rudeness, disrespect for privacy, indifference to quality, and utter dependency. I teach how to fit into a world I don't want to live in."

"I just can't do it anymore. I can't train children to wait to be told what to do; I can't train people to drop what they are doing when a bell sounds; I can't persuade children to feel some justice in their class placement when there isn't any, and I can't persuade children to believe teachers have valuable secrets they can acquire by becoming our disciples. That isn't true."

"Government schooling is the most radical adventure in history. It kills the family by monopolizing the best times of childhood and by teaching disrespect for home and parents."

Gatto went on to write a number of books including the widely read "Dumbing us Down", detailing the history of the "Prussian model" of government education, which as the name implies, was developed in pre-Nazi Germany. He pulled from direct sources, showing quotes directly from early politicians, and aristocrats explaining in their early writings that the mandatory school system was **intended to mold the servant class** into more obedient soldiers and citizens. In his book *A Different Kind of Teacher: Solving the Crisis of American Schooling*, John Taylor Gatto explained that the primary goal of real education is not to deliver facts but to guide students to the truths that will allow them to take responsibility for their lives.

Says Gatto: "**School is a twelve-year jail sentence** where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned. I teach school and win awards doing it. I should know."

"**It is absurd and anti-life** to be part of a system that compels you to sit in confinement with people of exactly the same age and social class. That system effectively cuts you off from the immense diversity of life and the synergy of variety; indeed, it cuts you off from your own past and future, sealing you in a continuous present much the same way television does. **It is absurd and anti-life** to move from cell to cell at the sound of a gong for every day of your natural youth in an institution that allows you no privacy and even follows you into the sanctuary of your home, demanding that you do its "homework." "How will they learn to read?" you ask, and my answer is "Remember the lessons of Massachusetts." **When children are given whole lives** instead of age-graded ones in cellblocks they learn to read, write, and do arithmetic with ease, if those things make sense in the kind of life that unfolds around them."

"**Independent study, community service, adventures and experience, large doses of privacy and solitude, a thousand different apprenticeships**—the one-day variety or longer—these are all powerful, cheap, and effective ways to start a real reform of schooling. But no large-scale reform is ever going to work to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force open the idea of "school" to include family as the main engine of education. **If we use schooling to break children away from parents**—and make no mistake, that has been the central function of schools since John Cotton announced it as the purpose of the Bay Colony schools in 1650 and Horace Mann announced it as the purpose of Massachusetts schools in 1850—we're going to continue to have the horror show we have right now."

"**Whatever an education is**, it should make you a unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish you with an original spirit with which to tackle the big challenges; it should allow you to find values which will be your road map through life; it should make you spiritually rich, a person who loves whatever you are doing, wherever you are, whomever you are with; it should teach you what is important, how to live and how to die."

**Gatto's research** made such a profound impact because it came from someone who was well-respected in the academic field, and he stuck to his principles when push came to shove. This was inside knowledge from a source who was difficult for parents to ignore or even the most rabid statist to dismiss. "We don't need state-certified teachers to make education happen — certification probably guarantees it won't."

**Take a look** at other of Gatto's books including *Weapons of Mass Instruction* and *The Underground History of American Education*. The *Ultimate History Lesson* documentary is also an incredible resource, featuring a 5-hour interview chronicling his life's work.

The world lost an extraordinary man on October 25th; the award-winning educator who became a whistleblower when he loudly quit the public school system and dedicated his life to exposing the harm that school does to children. Gatto's work helped lay the foundation of the unschooling movement which has become an important part of the modern anarchist's strategy for achieving a free society.

He left the statist system in 1991, leaving his job at the height of his career, after being named the New York State Teacher of the Year twice. His resignation went into brutal detail about the crushing impact that the structure of schools has on students.

In *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, he pointed out that the US was once a land where every sane person knew how to build a shelter, grow food, and entertain one another. Now most citizens have been rendered permanent children. It's the architects of forced schooling who are responsible for this.

**Thanks to Jeff Berwick**, founder of The Dollar Vigilante, host of the popular video podcast *Anarchast* and contributor to *Steemit*; &

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## NONVIOLENT ACTIVISTS BRING A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Grade 12 Afghan student Jamila Omary asked, "Do you have any plans to arm yourselves, because of the threats and dangers you have faced?"

Iqbal Khyber answered, "No. Though it is easy to buy weapons today, arming ourselves will worsen the war. Weapons will make us less secure."

**What a breath of fresh air in the stench of war-as-usual!**

Iqbal and his fellow **People's Peace Movement (PPM)** representative, Badshah Khan, had an unusual and delightfully different conversation with the young Afghan participants of the 'Youth on the Road to Peace Conference' September 2018, organized by the **Afghan Peace Volunteers (APVs)** in Kabul.

"Many governments and corporations have a thriving weapons business. I feel that this is dangerous because as they seek greater profits, they are threatening not just Afghanistan, but the whole world. We human beings may soon destroy ourselves," Iqbal Khyber had said to me afterwards.

We acquiesce to continued international arms sales because we are comfortable in our pet beliefs and fixed ideas about defeating 'terrorists' through superior warfare. Just as we preserve our fossil-fuel habits despite our awareness of climate science, we ignore U.S. congressionally-mandated evidence that the 'war against terrorism' has, in fact, increased terrorist attacks five-fold.

The majority of us are not the ones being killed, so we casually get used to wars festering in other places. But the smoke of war is catching up on all of us, making us sick at two minutes to midnight, as the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists have warned. Eventually the business of war can stifle and kill all of us, just as Iqbal fears.

It is remarkable that amidst war's unforgiving flames, Iqbal and Badshah wish to douse the inaccurate and unimaginative beliefs about the Afghan war.

They want fellow Afghans and the people of the world to consider nonviolence as a pragmatic solution, and they are 'walking their talk' beautifully.

So that we can consciously open our shut ears, Iqbal, Badshah and five other ordinary Afghan folk initiated the PPM as the Helmand Peace Convoy, walking more than 700 km from their unrestful home province of Helmand to Kabul. They were so passionately thirsty about delivering their message of peace that they walked in the fasting month of Ramadan, under the blazing summer sun.

They met the Conference participants after they had returned to Kabul from their barefoot convoy to several Northern Afghan provinces.

**Nurturing honest conversations and different mindsets**

I got dizzy thinking about these Afghan youth standing before the militants and the strongest militaries of the world that are 'congregated' in Afghanistan, and saying, "**We don't want your weapons and your armies. We want peace.**"

Iqbal continued his story, "Near the province of Samangan, we were told that the Taliban had laid an ambush, intending to hurt us. I discussed this with Badshah Khan and another core member of the PPM. We didn't tell the other members as we didn't want them to be un-necessarily afraid. The three of us decided to press on. In fact, we decided to go right to the 'headquarters' of the Taliban in that area."

Iqbal and his friends set up camp in Taliban territory, and though their microphones were taken away, no one harmed them physically.

The faces of the youth in the discussion room were drawn with both tension and excitement. They were hopeful, but they also had doubts.

Mohammad Jamil, a university student, was even suspicious of fellow Afghans living in Helmand Province, "Do the people of Helmand really want peace? What is the war in Helmand about?"

Iqbal replied, "The people are all tired of war. They want it to end. This is an economic war. In Helmand, minerals are extracted, and opium is traded."

Ending the war in Afghanistan without armies and weapons may seem overwhelming. Unsure about the PPM achieving favorable outcomes, Mah Gul asked, "What are your future plans and actions?"

"We wish to go to mosques, and have conversations with the people at the mosques," Iqbal stated.

Members of the PPM are showing that instead of using bullets and bombs, every individual and society can choose other ways to build peace. They suggest that peace has been elusive so far because we have largely presumed that war was necessary, and only chosen military strategies.

We have all been smoking the cigarette of war, despite the evidence on its cancer-causing nature. What we should do is to quit smoking. Quit the human behavior of war!

**War is not inevitable. It is an obsolete, repetitive choice. Everywhere, each of us can emulate these new-generation Afghans by ushering in breaths of fresh air!**

**-Dr. Hakim Young**

Hakim (Dr. Teck Young Wee) is a medical doctor from Singapore who has lived for the past 12 years in Afghanistan.

He is the mentor for the Afghan Peace Volunteers, an interethnic group of young people dedicated to finding alternatives to war.

Read other articles by Dr. Hakim at: [dissidentvoice.org](http://dissidentvoice.org)

**He suggests these sites:**  
**The People's Agreement to Abolish War:**  
[enough.ourjourneytosmile.com](http://enough.ourjourneytosmile.com)  
**World Beyond War's Peace Declaration:**  
[worldbeyondwar.org](http://worldbeyondwar.org)

