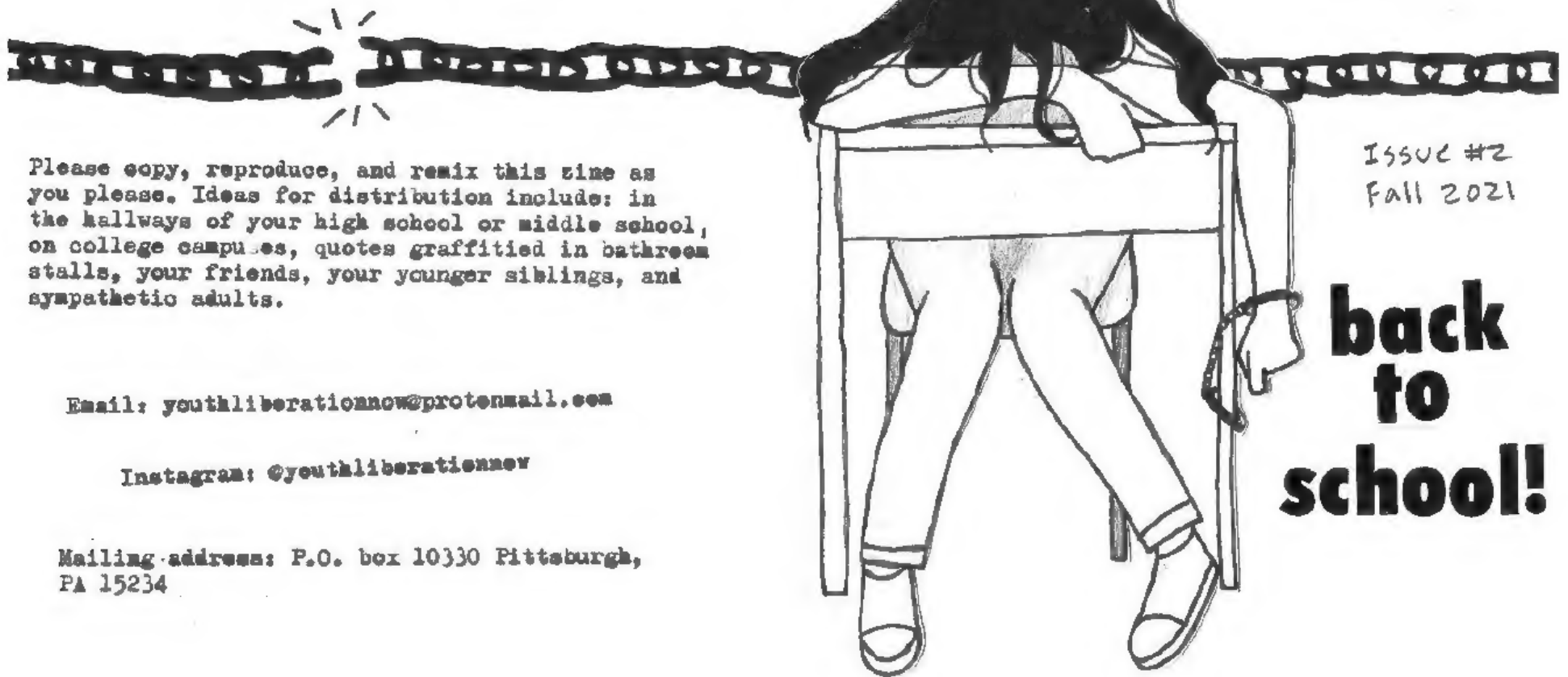


# YOUTH LIBERATION NOW



Please copy, reproduce, and remix this zine as you please. Ideas for distribution include: in the hallways of your high school or middle school, on college campuses, quotes graffitied in bathroom stalls, your friends, your younger siblings, and sympathetic adults.

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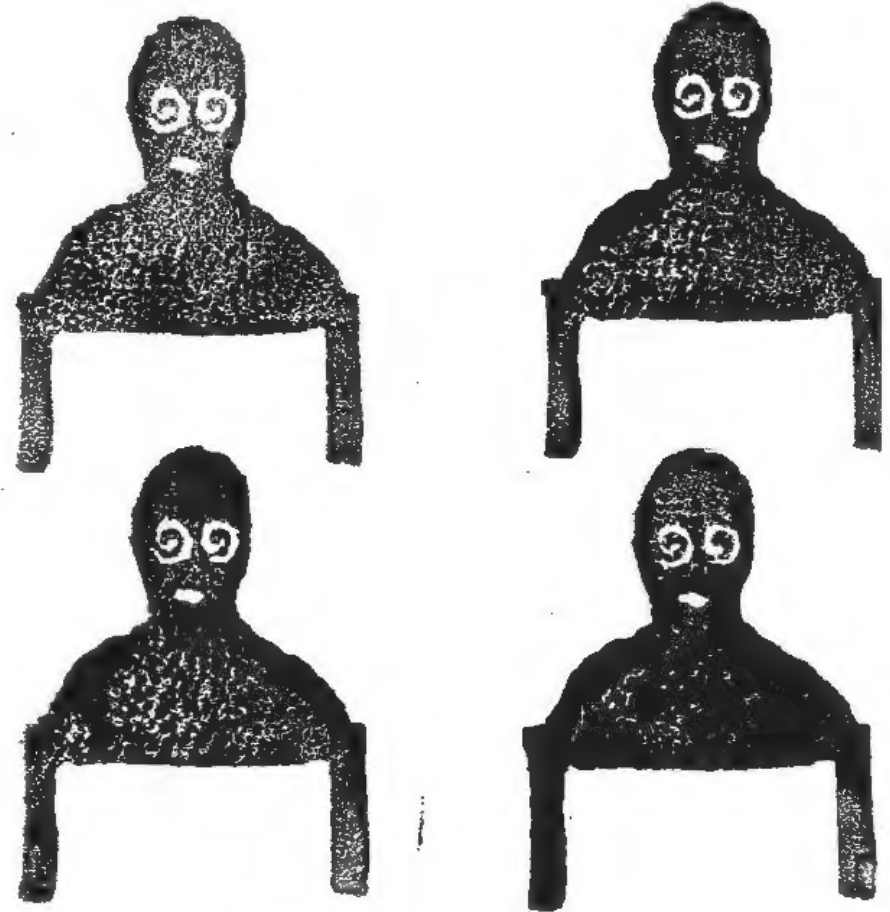
**back  
to  
school!**

It's that time of year again, when you (if you're under the age of 18) are forced to go back to school. This year "back to school" is synonymous with the endangerment of your health and safety. It's clear to see that school's priority is not you or your well-being. I'm sure you know that by now though. If you've gone to school like you're supposed to, you've experienced the unapelegetic brutality that it puts you through. You've experienced the tears, stress, anxiety, fatigue, and discomfort, all while being told it's a normal part of growing up.

**school** (skool), *n., adj., v., schooled, schooling.* —*n.* 1. an institution for teaching persons under college age. 2. a college or university. 3. an institution or academic department for instruction in a particular skill or field. 4. a systematic program of studies: *summer school*. 5. the activity of teaching or of learning under instruction: *No school today!* 6. the body of persons belonging to an educational institution: *The whole school applauded*. 7. a building, room, etc., housing an academic department or institution. 8. any place, situation, etc., that instructs or indoctrinates. 9. the body of pupils or followers of a master, system, method, etc.: *the Platonic school of philosophy*. 10. a. a group of artists whose works reflect a common conceptual, regional, or personal influence. b. the art and artists of a geographical location considered independently of stylistic similarity. 11. any group of persons having common attitudes or beliefs. —*adj.* 12. of or connected with a school or schools. —*v.t.* 13. to educate in or as if in a school; teach; train. 14. *chaic*, to reprimand. [bef. 900; ME *scōle* (*n.*), OE *scōl* < L *schola* < Gk *scholē* leisure employed in learning]

We know instinctively that life is more than these concrete walls, unopenable prison bar windows, and whiteboards. That life is more than an invasive sense of anxiety, purposelessness, and boredom. That life is more than school. This idea can be painful though. It's painful because we realize freedom is within our line of sight, but just beyond our grasp. We know we are trapped in this institution with no escape for however many years we have been assigned by our age. As young people, our own lives are more often than not beyond our own control.

# BACK TO



# SCHOOL

cut me out or photocopy me!

## A Short Introduction to Schoolhouse Mischief

When it comes to causing trouble on campus, you're targeting two things: Surveillance, and staff's ability to move across the campus. You want to create or expand blind spots and overall make the well-oiled machine of schooling catch a couple cracks and delays.

When it comes to cameras, it's simple. Slap some tape or stickers on the lens. Approach the camera from behind if you can, but if you can't just make sure to cover your face and put your ID in your pocket. If the camera is out of reach (usually the case) you can have a friend boost you or you can use a chair. The best time for this is after school when the hallways are almost empty. This usually gets cleaned up within a day, but it's still good to do since it diverts time away from other things, like patrolling halls or harassing dress code "violators". It also creates safe havens for those looking to skip classes.

If you're looking to interrupt movement across campus, the tried-and-true method is to glue locks. If done properly, it can require a trained locksmith to fix and can help you miss hours of class. This is most effective when done at the same time, by multiple people across campus. A good time for this action is after school when the halls are nearly empty. To glue the locks, get a tube of superglue preferably with a sharp tip. Put a small wire less than a fingernail's length into the lock, then insert the tube of glue into the lock and fill the lock with glue.



(21)

This zine will be an exploration of this problem, school, and what young people can do about it. If you don't know who the creator of this zine is, my name is Lark and I am a 16 year old anarchist with a passion for youth liberation, education, and art. This zine is all about youth liberation and is entirely written and compiled by young people for young people. Issues will come out twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. The first issue covered what youth liberation is and a bit of its history. If you would like a link to a printable pdf of the first issue, email me at [youthliberationnew@protonmail.com](mailto:youthliberationnew@protonmail.com)

a special thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue, directly through submissions or indirectly through conversations and ideas ♡



(2)

# The School System is suffering, Let it Die!

by Lark

School: some of us hate it, some of us love it, and some of us want to tear it down and hold its crumbling body in our arms as it collapses with the rest of this ugly society. What do we do with this institution that seems so noble on the surface? We are told that school is here to educate us, bringing us into a modern age of democracy, equality, and freedom. A closer look at school reveals an insidious nature. We see it in the fatigue of middle schoolers, in ten-year-olds on Prozac, and in the tears of mothers and five-year-olds on the very first day of school. We see it in the faint beeping of metal detectors in the cold of 7am and in another black kid in handcuffs on the floor of a cold marble hallway. We see it in rising fascism and our rising cynicism. What do we do with school when the world is coming apart at the seams? Well, we don't try to save it, that's for certain.

## You Can't Domesticate Me<sup>1</sup>

School was never meant to be an education. Since its beginning, school has existed for one reason: control. Every structure, method, or bit of knowledge that makes up school spins around this central axis. School has always functioned to break the will of children and purge them of their "wildness". This fact isn't a secret, it was outright stated by those who designed our school model. In 1898 one such person, Ellwood P. Cubberley, then Dean of the Stanford University School of Education, stated that

"Our schools are, in a sense, factories, in which the raw materials - children - are to be shaped and fashioned into products... The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of 20th century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down."<sup>2</sup>

succeed. Giving everyone the same things won't give everyone equal chances to succeed in the end."

"Preparing students for capitalist work like factory work. Repetitive stuff, standardized tests, not learning any applied concepts, discouraging creativity even in creative classes, working outside of the time you need to work, following instructions without question, etc."

"I think it's meant to be a machine that churns out just the right amount of high level workers that the government and society are comfortable with while shoving the rest down for low level jobs that pay less. It's engineered to make the same people fail over and over"

## What would you do with your time if you weren't in school?

"I would read, make art, spend time with my friends and family, cook/bake things, and learn about things I'm interested in. And I would have more time to figure out other things to do!"

"And finally, honestly, I'd also sit around. Not a lot, but I'd like to just stop, sit down, and listen to some music ... This world is built on constant expansion and productivity that sometimes taking a break feels like a crime, and not the cool type of crime."

## How do you feel your life would be different if you hadn't gone to any form of school and were instead given the resources to follow your interests and passions?

"I don't even know how to answer this - the majority of my life has been surrounded by academics. Happier, I guess."

year we even need security guards to escort us to the bathroom). There is usually one police officer in the school and it's not uncommon for there to be multiple police cars parked outside the school. There are also quite a few security guards spread throughout the hallways at all times. ... there is a dress code, but the only part that I've ever seen be enforced is the "no hats" rule (because apparently you can't tell who someone is in the security cameras if they are wearing a hat)."

"I'm the editor-in-chief of my school paper and everything we write must first be reviewed by an administrator before publication. While law restricts what they can and cannot censor, we are often forced to shy away from criticism of the school district or discussion of topics like sex and drugs. Treating criticism of authority as a punishable offense in schools is extremely harmful, but it's what to expect from the U.S. government."

**From purely your own experience, what do you think the real goal of school is? Is it the traditional "leveling the playing field and learning to participate in democracy" or is it something else?**

"In my experience, the goal of school seems to be to integrate a person into society, making them a part of that society. Our system of education is one that philosopher Paulo Freire would call a banking system of education, in which knowledge is essentially deposited to the students by the teachers, who are the ultimate authority over the students. Schools tend to give all students the same resources, but that doesn't really level the playing field. Different people are in different circumstances, and thus need different resources to

Throughout the entire history of schooling, we see people who desired to control and commodify those younger than them. And our schools are still laid out to do just that, having barely changed in structure and method since the early 1900s. If schools had any other goal they would have changed by now. But they have not. We still see rows of desks, factory-like bell schedules, and paddle marks on children's limbs. Somehow though, this system so designed has not quite produced 100 years of passive workers.

The truth is, you can't domesticate children. You can't fully beat a person's mind into submission with a paddle, only their body and fears. If this method of force succeeds in some way, it doesn't do so without horrible consequences. We see school's path of destruction in our friends on Zoloft, a twelve-year-old's suicidal ideation, four-year-olds diagnosed with ADHD, and anxious shaking voices. We are killing ourselves by refusing to let go of school. Literally, the suicide rate for teenagers increases by 95% for boys and 33% for girls when school is in session versus during the summer months.<sup>3</sup> Like animals in a cage, we show the symptoms of our imprisonment.

We can't keep lying to ourselves that school exists for the good of children. It doesn't. In reality, school is deeply harmful to those who attend it. School is and always has been meant to domesticate children, kill their creativity, and turn them into useful robots. I'll be the first to say, we don't need any more useful robots, and we never really did. How are you supposed to learn to work with others when you're told to shut up and sit still for the first 18 years of your life? What is communicated is that we aren't supposed to work with others or care about anything besides ourselves, both useful ideas for maintaining a capitalist society.

"What did you learn in school today?" "Nothing I can remember!"

④

①

At the end of this 100 year long experiment of compulsory school, school has failed to create anything close to an informed populace. Treating children as vessels to be filled with knowledge doesn't nurture critical thinking. But of course, that is not the goal of our education system. So we continue treating children as buckets to be filled and churn out dismal results. We forget somewhere around 60 percent of what we "learn" in school.<sup>4</sup> How much do you remember from your classes last year? Probably a small amount, but nothing worth the possible 180 or more hours you spent on that subject. Further, supposedly educated people don't understand incredibly basic concepts. One survey showed that one in four Americans believes that the Sun rotates around the Earth.<sup>5</sup> The benefits the school system provides are ridiculously low. What's the point when you don't (and sometimes *can't*) learn in school?

The issue is, school doesn't understand what real learning is. Learning (the kind that is useful and relevant to children themselves) requires freedom and space away from coercion and evaluation. Children naturally want to learn and are wired to do exactly that. As a once voracious reader, I know I learned to read outside of school. It's possible you did too. It's most likely that you learned how to walk and talk outside of school. You didn't need to be graded on how many times you stumbled, you just tried again and again until you walked. If you had been graded and coached you probably wouldn't have learned so quickly. Evaluation is detrimental to learning and creativity<sup>6</sup>, something that goes against school's fundamental tenets.

A large part of why I hate school is because of how much I love learning. Within the institution, it's easy to see how incompatible the two ideas are, institutional schooling and learning. We sense the meaninglessness of what we're doing in the moment, a moment suffocated with ticking clocks, droning voices, and tapping pencils, knowing that a year from now none of this

"Definitely negatively. Like I said, it's a shadow and a burden over my life, I can't take the stress since I'm ADHD, and it's the main reason I'm being forced into psychiatry."

"Negatively. My stress had gone through the roof sophomore year and would've gotten worse if I didn't go to therapy junior year. I used to pick my cuticles a lot from stress and spacing out but that isn't as much of an issue now [that] I know how to manage it."

**Have you ever been discriminated against by authority figures in school?**

"I have tourettes and i was kicked out of the marching band because my vocal tics were 'too problematic' and i've been kicked out of class multiple times"

**How much freedom do you have in school? Can you leave campus? What can you say in your school newspaper? Are there police in your school? Is there a strict dress code?**

"There are armed police on every floor. Armed. With guns. And handcuffs. We can't leave campus at all once the bell rings unless we're going to a doctor's appointment, makes us a "liability" is the excuse I've heard. There's a very strict dress code. No dyed hair (although this isn't enforced amazingly), long pants, tucked in shirts, a belt, the shirt must have the school crest on it, and you can't wear a necklace unless it's like a cross."

"My school does not have very much physical freedom. We aren't allowed to leave campus and we have to ask to use the bathroom (and at seemingly random parts of the

# School According to Students

Answers are from a survey of 8 high school students in various grades and locations.

## Has school negatively impacted your life? If so, how?

"I almost have no time for myself, and I feel separated from my friends since I live far from where the school is and can't really hang out with them. Also, it's just added a huge weight on my life. It feels like every other second is spent worrying about assignments or grades or whatever."

"School has definitely negatively impacted my life. I feel like I don't have time to do anything I actually want to do and when I do try to do something fun, the thought of 'I should be doing school right now' is always on my mind. Also, in general, sitting on an uncomfortable chair in a dimly lit box full of people for 7-8 hours every day isn't exactly how I would like to be living my life."

## Has school positively impacted your life? If so, how?

"I've made friends that will last for a long time and made connections with people who will go lots of different places. I've had impactful teachers and classes I've genuinely enjoyed and have good memories from."

"Attending public high school has opened my eyes to much that I wouldn't have seen otherwise. I've become more conscious of the ways of the world, but at the same time, less conscious of what I want and what I'm doing."

## How does school impact your mental health? Positively or negatively?

will matter. We can feel our precious time slipping into a boring death. The truth is that learning isn't separate from life. We learn just as much, if not more, in moments spent staring at the stars and in conversations with friends than we do sitting on hard plastic chairs in first period. The lie is that we need those plastic chairs to learn when really we need room to breathe, play, and live.

Despite reality, school continues to destroy real learning in the name of education. School is an environment of constant evaluation, constant coercion through grades, tests, and violence, and no meaningful freedom. School tells us that without these coercive structures, children wouldn't learn anything. This is a lie, told again and again to preserve the system and oppress children. Real learning is rarely found in school.

## Every Dream I Have About School is a Nightmare

School feels inescapable. Every aspect of our life is invaded by it, as children and as adults. Those who have been out of school for decades still dream that they are late to class, spilling papers across a foggy hallway. Suppressing our needs and desires for thirteen years wears us down in an irreparable way. The damage often prevents us from truly living for the rest of our lives. Yet some of us still dig our claws deep into schooling, proposing it again and again as a solution. When will we embrace life instead of the death wish of school?

Our attachment stems from the fact that school has so dominated our world that we see it as a natural part of life. We can't seem to imagine a world beyond school, one where children are allowed control over their own lives. This is despite the fact that compulsory school has only existed for the last 100 years, only three or four generations of people. Before that, the vast majority of people successfully educated themselves without help from any institution. As evidenced by all of human history, (6)

children don't need to be taught. They don't need to go to school. It's just not all that necessary.

Yet in 2021, school looms over nearly every child between the ages of five and eighteen. School is invasive and with every passing day it becomes more so. There is something about being in school that makes you feel as if your whole life is consumed by it. You wake up at 6am (7am if you're lucky) and groggily pull yourself out of bed. Then comes the bus, the bells, the chatter, the tests, the anxiety, the boredom, the momentary elation, the bus again. After seven hours in the building, you have another two hours of homework and three hours of extracurriculars. Life is utterly consumed by a stifled sense of living. There is no escape. You have to do this all again tomorrow.

Someday we ought to wake up to real life and realize that school was nothing but a mirage designed to trick us into believing that society must continue as it is. If we believe capitalism is killing the world, then why do we send children to a place that is meant to bring them into that grand fight against life and humanity? If we are in school, why do we still go to school? In a society so rotten, we often agree to rot with it to survive.

**Don't Liberate Me, I'll Do It Myself** (*Disclaimer: This is for entertainment purposes only. Get back to doing your homework kiddos, and don't look out that window over there. But really, don't hurt anyone or yourself and be smart and responsible about what you do.*)

So, if school isn't the answer, what is? The answer can only lie in you, a young person angry with school. Your anger about school is real and powerful. It isn't just you being a moody teenager, it's the normal response to repression and having no control over your life. Get out of the situation or change it and you might be able to recover some of the humanity you lost in your years of schooling.

⑦

What youth are taught in schools, how their reality is shaped, must not be up to the discretion of those in power. For the benefit of burgeoning young minds and democracy alike, the educational path of the student must be determined by the student. Not only will they be more eager to learn, but what they learn will be their own rather than the pickings of an over invested adult.

Equally important is the uncensored expression of students. Allowing them to freely share their beliefs encourages the discourse necessary in a healthy democracy and treats them with the respect they deserve as young people, though current legal precedent can make it difficult to spread their word. By law, student publications can be prior-reviewed by school administrators before distribution. In this stage, many may be censored depending on their contents. Be aware, however, that students still take a great degree of their 1st Amendment rights into the school building which cannot be infringed upon.

Research both your school's policies and case law regarding student expression to ensure that you are not being censored unlawfully. Students who attend private schools may deal with harsher censorship since they do not have to adhere to the same federal restrictions. This zine could be censored lawfully or unlawfully depending on where you go to school so always be aware of your rights.



Boy... I sure do  
love this government  
approved reading  
material

⑩



# Censorship: Manipulating the Student's Reality by Scratch

Schools are said to fulfill a number of purposes for American youth: to prepare them for life, the workforce, the democratic whims of the nation, and the boundaries of our society. Where schooling falls short is the utter disregard for the world in which we actually live. Students are met with a static academic attitude while they are forced to cope with the push and pull of the world outside the classroom. When the reality presented in school does not mirror that of the rest of the world, it's cause for concern.

The student's reality is curated by the powerful. Every piece of information presented to them is handpicked by a teacher, administrator, politician, or whomever else is given the authority. Relevant and important topics surrounding sex, drugs, race, and sexual orientation are too often deemed taboo by these chosen people and omitted from the students' reality.

Omission is a form of censorship. Censorship is not exclusive to overtly limiting student speech or banning books, though it commonly manifests in those ways too. Any form of censorship in schools is an unruly overstep on the part of whoever's in charge, whether it be government or private organization.

While of course young people have other means of accessing information, their lives often revolve around the academics they're subjected to so heavily on a daily basis. It's important that they're given the fullest picture possible with the resources that school can offer. Schools have the potential to be hotbeds for free-thinking youth, insulated from the grasp of the elder generations. Instead, they exist as an avenue for adults to indoctrinate, censoring what they please to achieve their desired outcome.

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Young people, how would you like to strike from school? Smash those pesky security cameras around your campus? Occupy the campus? Open a totally youth-led community center with free art materials and classes? Drop out and get a real education? At the end of this essay is a list of resources on how to resist school. There are a million ways for us to destroy schools and build a world of knowledge and learning in their place.

You, the students, have the power in schools. Without you, schools wouldn't be able to function. No matter how much teachers and administrators might act like they have all of the control and power, they don't. That's the trick here, the one that lets you get free. You can't free yourself without others to support you though. Distribute this zine in your school, have conversations with your friends, find those who are just as angry as you. Then, with those people, get to imagining what a world without school could look like.

Would it be days and hours spent in a communal space talking with those you love and care about? Having real conversations about the books and movies you love, without the discussion rubrics? Scientists, artists, authors, letting children observe and apprentice with them? Being with those older than you without the condescension of "teacher"? Would it be spending time solving the issues that plague your mind? Traveling the world at 14? Spending time outdoors any time of the day or year? Being truly, deeply, immersed in your community? Having the time to rest all day when your body needs to and to and to jump, run, and work all night long when you need to? Right now, this might seem like a far off daydream. But it doesn't have to be (and it *won't* be) if you take matters into your own hands.

With a world teetering on the edge of collapse, environmental and political, we have to begin to build our own world now. We can't afford to go back to normal. Seize this

8

moment of upheaval and kickstart the future. This idea is really at the core of organizing as a young person: **do not spend your time waiting until you're 18 or in college, you have the power to change your situation now.** You are alive, breathing, and wriggling with your own real feelings and desires now, in this very moment. You won't be any more alive at 18 than you are at 14.

Listen when resistance comes bleeding through. In our mental resistance to school is our connection to life. Whether that resistance comes to us in blood-red anger, depressed fatigue, suicidal ideation, or procrastination, it is our human resistance to being prescribed, domesticated, shallowed out, and put into a box. And our connection to and vast separation from everything that makes us human. The wind in the trees, the sounds of a flowing river, the curves and contours of another's body, the softness of grass in the summer, our yearning for freedom, and our own passions and desires. So keep it up. Don't fight your resistance, it's telling you something important about how you're meant to live your life. Don't fight yourself, fight back, burn the schools!

**In a school that has abolished all adventure, the only adventure left is to abolish that school.**



asking overly invasive questions, don't answer them. It's always fine to tell someone "No" or "I don't feel comfortable telling people that".

Always avoid using public Wi-Fi. This goes especially for school Wi-Fi, since administrators can monitor everything connected devices are doing. If you must use school Wi-Fi, make sure to use a strong VPN and never sign into an important/private chatroom on public networks.

OPSEC, and security in general, is a team sport. All these precautions you take would be nullified if your best friend is taking uncensored pictures of you/ your group.

It's valuable to teach your friends important security skills, like how to use a VPN, how to censor and wipe metadata from images, the dangers of public networks, and social media anonymity.

When we work together, and pay attention to school's intrusions on our lives, we can fight against it and render them useless.



# Safe? Under the Watchful Eyes of School by Ophelia

Armored doors. Armed guards. Cameras everywhere. Lunchrooms and common areas specifically designed to suppress large gatherings and organization. What kind of institution comes to mind when you envision these things? Is it a prison? or maybe a mental "hospital"? Well, what I'm describing here isn't either of those things. It's the average American high school.

Supporters of these security measures claim that they are here to keep us safe, to protect us in the event an armed man roams the hallways with the intent to kill. In reality, all these systems do is keep us paranoid and anxious. These systems, like many other facets of the institution of school, are meant to desensitize us. They are preparing us for a hyper-militarized and surveilled world. The cameras at the end of the hallways or right outside the bathrooms are replaced with cameras on every street corner and right outside your window. Guards with pistols are replaced with police armed with attack dogs and rifles.

The hyper-surveillance of schools doesn't just stop once you leave campus, you're being monitored at home as well. This could be done in many ways, through a borrowed device recording every move you do to administrators stalking student's personal social media accounts. We constantly have eyes on us.

There are ways to combat these intrusions, however. This comes in the form of personal and operational security, also known as OPSEC. OPSEC is quite simple: keep who you are and what you're doing up to ambiguity. Never share who you are (name and face) anywhere on the internet. You can, obviously, use a nickname or a chosen name, but never share your legal/given name publicly. You should also make it hard to pinpoint exactly where you are. For example, "California" and "North Texas" are fine, but "Portland" and "Tampa" are not. Keep in mind that when you're talking online, your conversations are never private, so make sure you don't over-share. If someone seems like they're

## Resources and projects for school resistance:

- *The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education*, is an excellent guide with everything you need to know about unschooling/homeschooling if you want to drop out or educate yourself outside of school.
- The Youth Liberation Front has chapters across the U.S. Any young person can create a chapter or join an existing chapter. They focus on youth liberation, anarchism, and anti-fascism.
- The Purple Thistle Center, now defunct, is a great example of a community learning center run by young people.
- "Student and Youth Organizing" is a pamphlet written by kids who successfully organized with Ann Arbor Youth Liberation in the 70s.
- "I Want To Do This All Day: Redefining Learning and Reinventing Education" is a podcast series on radical learning spaces.
- "Youth Liberation Handbook" by South Florida antifascists outlines basic sabotage tips for school resistance.
- school-survival.net, though a bit dated, has lots of resources and tips on surviving and resisting school.
- "Affinity Groups: Essential Building Blocks of Anarchist Organization" is a helpful basic guide on how to get together a group of friends and take action.
- "Blockade, Occupy, Strike Back" details how to occupy a school.

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*A Warning to Students of All Ages* by Raoul Vaneigem  
*Deschooling Society* by Ivan Illich  
*Compulsory Miseducation* Paul Goodman

# PRISON, FACTORY, OR SCHOOL?



Strangeways prison,  
Manchester, UK



Park slope elementary school,  
Park slope NY



Early 20th century factory  
and modern classroom



Twin Towers correctional  
facility, Los Angeles



Laney High school,  
North Carolina



Pitchess Detention center  
South Facility, Los  
Angeles California



Hononegah High school,  
Rockton, IL



California prison



Seymour High school,  
Connecticut



Florence correctional  
center, Florence AZ



New York school

(11)

(12)