



EDITORIAL

Abolishing Slavery in South Carolina Schools..

Part One on How to Fix the Broken Educational System in Our State..

November 5, 2007

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

- U.S. Constitution - Amendment XIII, Section 1 (Ratified July 9, 1868)

(Columbia, SC) - In 1868, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified by 3/4ths of those states. Along with the Constitution and the previous 12 amendments, it made clear for all time that all involuntary servitude, except for punishment, was just plain wrong. Yet, today, people who believe that control is the main business of government have created another kind of slavery. And like the slavery of old, it is equally seductive and equally evil. Until and unless South Carolina rethinks our ruinous school policies, attendance policy uppermost, it will continue to subject its most helpless citizens to slavery, endangering the infrastructure of the very state the educational system is intended to help. We must embrace the abolition of mandatory attendance in public schools.

Our Founders knew that freedom from involuntary servitude included freedom from someone else telling you that you had

to believe what they said was right, and that beyond the measures of common morality (don't steal, don't cheat, don't lie, don't do murder), was the best way to live. If you had to have a government, less really was more. So, the Constitution they wrote became a series of protections of citizens from their government. The document was stating, in effect, "No matter how smart you think you are, you're not smart enough to deny me my freedom, which, by the way, stops at my nose, the which, if you go beyond, you can lose that freedom."

So what, I ask, have our children done to offend us so deeply, that we must force them into involuntary servitude? For what else would you call it when the state mandates a citizen, who has done no wrong, to spend most of his waking day, laboring in a place commanded by the state without fiscal remuneration?

Here are the usual arguments:

- * Students could learn at home.

- But if the act is compulsory, then what is the difference between mandatory home schooling and house arrest?

- * It's for their own good.

- Was not the moral allowance for slavery an arrogant certitude that a certain race had to be slaves because it was for their own good - a "good and necessary thing" for the slave?

- * Children are helpless and cannot tell what is the right thing for them to do."

- Are not the ante-bellum arguments for slavery the same? Didn't the planters, their clergy, and other high-minded, culturally savvy intellectuals know far better than the slaves what was good for them? Isn't this merely an extension of this same slave-owners' arrogance?

- * What about the student who has no effective parent, shouldn't he be made to show up - maybe something will trickle down?

- Besides being a very lazy way to solve a problem, it can be convincingly argued that the education system is not responsible for making any child attend school, that attendance is the sole purview of the guardian of record. It is just plain lazy to foist onto the education system a job so obviously belonging to a parent or the child welfare system in lieu of a parent.

Consider also, that if educational slavery is an acceptable concept, then why not real slavery, or segregation, or the beating of children? Why not "expose" them, as the Romans did, and so rid ourselves of all those children who are not capable of learning in the way we know best? Why don't we just negate the passion and torture of the Civil Rights Movement? One can create equality of a sort by making everyone a slave, equally. And if this is true, why, then, do we think that involuntary students in a school will act any different from prisoners in a cell or slaves in the field? It would be quite revealing to endeavor such a study - schools and prison psychology.

Malcolm X recognized the inherent slavery of involuntary servitude disguised as good intentions. So did DuBois with his "talented tenth," who knew that freedom comes from leadership; and he knew that it must be a free leadership. Even Washington, freed from slavery, seeking freedom in education, knew that forced education was as dangerous and regressive as no education.

Unfortunately, this is not just an academic discussion. There is real money at stake here - enough to destroy the state of South Carolina.

When you force people to bend to your will in any governmental setting, the government becomes liable for any number of civil grievances - any number of which are completely justifiable. We, the citizens of the various school districts in our state, are already the victims of thousands of lawsuits brought, justifiably and unjustifiably. This isn't just about unmanageable behavior. We're already governing our schools to avoid civil and criminal lawsuits, rather than doing what is best for our students.

The "No Child Left Behind" act is only the latest symptom of

the realization that our system is really, really screwed up and needs a desperate fixing. The problem is that NCLB isn't going to fix anything, because it is only a band-aid over the open wound of slavery which permeates the system. But in this case, it extends slavery to the teachers, forcing the creation of hundreds of new overseers to whip the teachers into teaching what the NCLB act arrogantly supposes is learning.

There is a very simple way to get out of this morass, to allow teachers to teach and students to learn, but it requires individualism and courage, something we have been breeding out of our children since the late 50's. Certainly, the parents of public school students can share the blame, having embraced cowardice and collective laziness so subtle that they may not even be aware they are so entrenched.

We must abolish mandatory attendance.

I believe, however, - and this is the important bit - that it is the state's responsibility to afford an education for its populace - as a matter of infrastructure. The state must make an education available in order to enable its citizens in the pursuit of happiness. And as it is doing so, as a matter of social morality, it CANNOT demand that a person use the education made available.

If the state builds a bridge across a river, it cannot force you to use it. You can choose to fly over the river in a balloon or swim across it. You don't have to cross the river at all. An education, like a bridge, should be AVAILABLE all the time for everyone to use, but none to HAVE TO use.

Wouldn't this be chaos? No. Most people can and want to educate their children. But there are some who for one reason or another do not want to or care to. And as hard as this may sound, it is not the duty of a citizen to make amends for the stupidity of his fellow citizen. It is a person's unalienable right to be stupid and to pass his stupidity on to his children. As an aside, poverty numbers were dwindling until the Johnson administration, when we arrogantly thought we could end poverty, rather than ameliorate it. To this day, poverty continues to be a lucrative business for the cynical and soulless.

It can also be said that in any socialist system, forced adherence is the only adherence. People are not inherently either good or bad. But they are inherently selfish. Freeing their children forces them to come to grips with the

consequence of their life choices. And, in the end, who's choice is it, anyway? Is education about puppetry or knowledge? Are our teachers seducers or teachers? Are they bad habit enablers or presenters and enablers of ideas, abilities, and contents? Truancy is increasing, and laughable truancy initiatives, such as the ones tried at Clemson University, are failing. We are running out of time.

A final point, consider this: School administrators are so afraid of being sued, that a teacher cannot video a student who aggresses against the teacher without the student's permission. A teacher cannot video a student, even if it would provide evidence that could be used to help in diagnosing a disability which could lead to helping the student. Don't ask how this could happen. You KNOW the answer.

To sum up, the argument is a simple one of liability. The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled continuously that involuntary servitude by a state entity makes the entity liable for all occurrences which derive from that involuntary servitude - Attica was just the start. Even the most depraved prisoner in the most disgusting cell in the country has more actual civil rights than a student who is forced to attend any school, of his own choosing or not. Liability means we citizens of South Carolina pay the price. And we are learning that we cannot afford the price of mandatory attendance. The number of lawsuits against our school districts is already staggering. And rightly so. As parents learn of their opportunities to sue schools, those lawsuits will increase. Liability means we got the attendance thing wrong. And I'm saying that it's the fault of our own arrogance.

Liberals and conservatives should both want to free our children from our current oppressive state system. For, if there is tyranny in our schools today "for our own good," will it not be everywhere in the future? Do liberals want to live under the harsh thumb of conservatives and their rules. Do Conservatives want to deal with the silliness of morally laissez-faire Liberals? Education should not be about control. It should be about knowledge. The persons who want to control our children may think they are doing good, but they do so at the expense of a tyranny so subtle that they cannot see its failure. Our children, our schools, our parents, our homes, and our fortunes have become slaves because of it.

(Click Here - Part 2 - Teaching Our Free Citizens - Simplifying The System.)

- *Dick Anderson*

FEEDBACK



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