Youth Rights, Dignity, and the Anti-Democratic Values of Public Schooling

Beautiful article by a high school student fed up with public schooling's authoritarian model for education:

> *As students, we are told that we are being made into an "informed citizenry" capable of maintaining a vibrant democracy. Indeed, we are told that we must give up most of our constitutional rights in the name of achieving this goal. We are compelled to attend an institution where our every action, from speaking, to moving, to going to the bathroom is strictly controlled by an authority figure. We have no right to due process in this institution, the word of the school authorities is final, and in fact our meager protestations of any wrongful accusation are often called "disrespectful" and used as another justification for punishment. We are also limited in our freedom of speech and of assembly, we cannot leave class to assemble and petition our government and the Supreme Court has explicitly prohibited any speech that would disrupt the educational process. Most of the first 18 years of our lives are fundamentally shaped by a process in which we have absolutely no say. This seems explicitly nonsensical. Should we give up our democratic rights in the name of preserving democracy? Does an institution which has power over countless individuals without giving them any representation or say in how this institution is run really the best preparation for a democratic society? Rather than creating an informed citizenry capable of engaging in the democratic process, compulsory education creates apathy, harms our ability to engage in real education, and actively harms democracy.*
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> *Is it surprising that we do not care about what we are taught in our classes? Is it surprising that we are not interested in learning? When someone has been forced to do something against their will for so*

> *many years there is bound to be some resentment. More than that, there is bound to be some resistance. The disengagement from school and learning is not some inherent quality of the adolescent; it is a very natural defense mechanism against control. Can you imagine someone saying, "I know I have no real choice in how I spend the majority of my time, and I couldn't be more happy or grateful!" Disengagement is the only way to stay sane under a system of compulsory education. When most of our daily lives are controlled by others, the only way we can still be free is by not granting them respect or legitimacy. If we are able to say to ourselves, "None of this really matters. I may have to go to school, but at least I am free to hate it," then the constant condescension from teachers can be shrugged off, and the lack of respect from school officials can be ignored.*

by Defitzwater, read the rest.