

A Living Testament of My Convictions



Send him mail. [f](#) [t](#)

“One Improved Unit” is an original column appearing sporadically on Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OIU-only RSS feed available [here](#).

In my last column of this series, I shared my family culture and its evolution over the last two years. My purpose in doing so was to demonstrate how, in order to change our larger culture, we must first change ourselves. While our actions will have an immediate effect on those we have the most influence over, namely our spouses and children, they will also affect others that we interact with. In order to affect positive change, then, we must continually pose as a living testament to the convictions that we hold.

Self-Ownership and Non-Aggression

Self-ownership is the principle, however constructed, that says that every person is the rightful owner or proprietor of the body in which they inhabit. And non-aggression is the principle that says that because every person is the rightful owner or proprietor of the body in which they inhabit, nobody else has the right to handle or hurt that body against their will. Likewise, because ownership (the exclusive right to control) in things external to the body follows from the principle of self-ownership, the principle of non-aggression also applies to one’s rightful property.

As a firm adherent to the principles of self-ownership and non-aggression, my actions must always convey to the world two things: 1) that I will never initiate an act of aggression toward another human being or his rightful property, and 2) that I will always claim responsibility for my actions. The first prevents me from stealing from, assaulting, raping, or defrauding others, and it also prevents me from participating in my society’s political systems. The second guarantees that if I violate the first, purposefully or accidentally, I will own the consequences of my actions and do everything in my power to make things right.

Nonviolence

Voluntaryism is the philosophy that says that all interactions with other people should happen voluntarily, or not at all, ie. the voluntary principle. Though as a voluntaryist I recognize the legitimacy in retaliatory aggression (self-defense), my commitment to the

voluntary principle prevents me from retaliating aggressively without first considering a voluntary, or nonviolent approach. Both in the cases of immediate (a mugger) and long-term (the state) self-defense, I will try to use and exhaust all nonviolent strategies to end the aggression. In the former, that would mean meeting the mugger's demand for my wallet, thereby avoiding injury. And in the latter, that would mean spreading ideas antithetical to the state, disregarding the state's myriad aggressive laws as acts of civil disobedience as safely as I can (I have a family to consider, after all), participating in the counter-economy, raising my children away from government schools, and other nonviolent acts of resistance.

Peaceful Parenting

The principles of self-ownership and non-aggression apply to every person that I interact with. If I am to be a living testament of my convictions, I cannot treat different groups of people differently. Children are in many ways different than adults. They are less mature and have less control over themselves. Many adults, even adults that claim to believe in the principles of self-ownership and non-aggression, fail to show their children the value and importance in adhering to these principles. They fail by not respecting their children's either actual or entitled self-ownership. They use aggression, like spanking or compulsory education (schooling), and try to justify it in the grounds that it's necessary. If one truly believes in the principles of self-ownership and non-aggression, how can it ever be necessary to disregard them? And more, how can one expect their children to ever learn the value and importance of these principles if they are not given the opportunity to live them, or if these principles are not observed in relation to them? I assure you, using aggression toward children is *never* necessary, whether it's punishment or schooling.

Radical Unschooling

I believe that learning happens everywhere and all the time, for children and adults alike. As an unschooling dad, I've made it my top priority to help my children every way I can to explore what interests them most, each and every day. They've learned that they can come to me with any question or concern, and I will always listen and do what I can to facilitate their curiosity. Because learning is life and life is learning, I want my children to see that no matter how old we get, we can always find new things to be curious about. I am continually expanding my knowledge about the world both in fiction and non-fiction. I want not just my children but everyone to see that I consider education to be a life-long commitment.

Final Thoughts

The only way that I can honestly claim to believe in something is *to live it*. Saying one thing and doing another might be easier, but it makes one a fraud. I don't want to be a fraud.

Instead, I want to show my children and the world the value and importance of the principles of self-ownership and non-aggression. The only way to do that is to apply it equally to everyone, young and old. As a libertarian and a voluntaryist, I would be a hypocrite and a liar if I were to spank, send them to school against their will, or otherwise aggress against my children. Being a living testament means living your convictions in order to testify to others their value and importance. I hope to see more libertarians and voluntaryists become living testaments of their principles.