

## The End of Childhood in the Era of the Emerging American Police State

Written by John W. Whitehead

Wednesday, 08 January 2014 09:23

---

- [319.95\\$ Autodesk AutoCAD Architecture 2014 \(64-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Creative Suite 4 Web Standard](#)
- [Discount - Lynda.com - Joomla! 2.5 Essential Training](#)
- [19.95\\$ Acala DVD Creator 3 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap HogBay Software TaskPaper MAC](#)
- [Buy Adobe Flash Professional CS5 \(en,de,es,fr,it,nl,pt,sv,no,da\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Autodesk Navisworks Simulate 2011](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk AutoCAD MEP 2015 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [29.95\\$ Infinite Skills - Learning SolidWorks 2013 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Intuit TurboTax Home & Business 2012](#)
- [Download FileMaker Pro 11: The Missing Manual](#)
- [Buy Cheap ABest Video to AVI MPEG VCD DVD Converter](#)
- [Discount - MakeMusic Finale 2012 MAC](#)

It wouldn't be a week in America without another slew of children being punished for childish behavior under the regime of zero tolerance that plagues our nation's schools. Here are some of the latest incidents.

In Pennsylvania, a 10-year-old boy was suspended for shooting an imaginary "arrow" at a fellow classmate, using nothing more than his hands and his imagination. Johnny Jones, a fifth-grader at South Eastern Middle School, was suspended for a day and threatened with expulsion under the school's weapons policy after playfully using his hands to draw the bowstrings on a pretend "bow" and "shoot" an arrow at a classmate who had held his folder like a gun and "shot" at Johnny. Principal John Horton characterized Johnny's transgression as "making a threat" to another student using a "replica or representation of a firearm" through the use of an imaginary bow and arrow.

In Utah, a seven-year-old boy was arrested and berated by police because he ran away from school. The boy showed up at his mother's house late in the afternoon, at which point he explained that he had left the school of his own accord. The mother called the school and explained what happened, at which point the principal decided to call the police, despite knowing that the boy was in the protection of his mother. An officer arrived at the house, told the boy to "straighten up," took him outside, handcuffed him, and yelled at him, saying, "Is this the life you want?"

In Colorado, a six-year-old boy was suspended and accused of sexual harassment for kissing the hand of a girl in his class on whom he had a crush. Child psychologist Sandy Wurtele

## The End of Childhood in the Era of the Emerging American Police State

Written by John W. Whitehead

Wednesday, 08 January 2014 09:23

---

commented on the case, noting that, for first-graders such as Hunter Yelton, things such as kissing are a normal part of development, and that the school's reaction sends mixed messages to developing minds. After a good deal of negative publicity, Canon City Schools Superintendent Robin Gooldy decided to alter the offense from "sexual harassment" to "misconduct."

In New York, three students were arrested while waiting for a bus to arrive and take them to a basketball scrimmage. The three were part of a group of a dozen basketball players who were waiting on a downtown sidewalk on their coach's instructions, and they were approached by a police officer who demanded they disperse. They explained that they were waiting for a bus, but the officer decided to arrest them anyway. Even when the coach arrived and explained to the officer that the boys were simply waiting for a bus so they could get to their scrimmage, the officer would not relent. He actually threatened to arrest the coach as well.

While any normal society would condemn all these acts as absurd and harmful to young people, we live in a world in which parents, teachers, and students have all been conditioned to fear the slightest bending of the rules, even when it's obvious that no harm has been done and that no crime has been committed. We are living in the age of fear and paranoia, an age that threatens the very core concepts of childhood development, and even the basic facets of our democratic society.

Add to the execution of zero-tolerance policies the phenomenon of "lockdowns" of public schools, which are sometimes prompted by legitimate threats, but more often by nearby domestic disturbances and false alarms. Students are corralled into closets and hallways, met with police officers armed to the hilt, searched by drug-sniffing dogs, and generally made to feel as if they are living in a war zone. This trend of acclimating children to a mindset in which they should always be fearful, on edge, and deferential to authority is compounded by so-called "drills" in which police officers pretend they are spree shooters. Dahlia Lithwick, writing for Slate.com, notes that these bizarre attempts to prepare kids for an active-shooter situation do not really prepare students for emergency situations but rather simply frighten them.

Their true purpose, as I document in my book *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, seems to be simply to acclimate children to the mindset of paranoia and absolute deference to authority that has taken hold of the American populace at large. Children, who are naturally suspect of illegitimate authority, are being conditioned to accept any and all orders from on high, even those that they inherently know are wrong.

## The End of Childhood in the Era of the Emerging American Police State

Written by John W. Whitehead  
Wednesday, 08 January 2014 09:23

---

In the face of this madness, some schools have begun scaling back the zero-tolerance regime. For example, schools in Broward County, Florida – which saw more than 1,000 student arrests in 2011 – have begun a policy that de-emphasizes arrests, expulsions, and suspensions in favor of counseling and keeping kids in school who run into trouble.

As Broward County Schools Superintendent Robert W. Runcie noted: “A knee-jerk reaction for minor offenses – suspending and expelling students – this is not the business we should be in. We are not accepting that we need to have hundreds of students getting arrested and getting records that impact their lifelong chances to get a job, go into the military, get financial aid.”

Since implementing the new policies, “school-based arrests have dropped by 41 percent, and suspensions, which in 2011 added up to 87,000 out of 258,000 students, are down 66 percent from the same period in 2012.” Still, most school districts across the country maintain a strict adherence to zero-tolerance policy.

Alongside the zero-tolerance mess is the general censorship of student viewpoints when discussing topics that are not approved by school administrators. For example, when a Pennsylvania student newspaper decided to run an editorial explaining why it found the term “Redskin” – the nickname of the school’s athletic teams – insensitive, and why it would no longer use the name in the school newspaper, the school administration reprimanded the students and demanded they continue to use the term. In another case, a student journalist in Virginia was reprimanded for writing a column on sexuality-based bullying, also known as “slut-shaming,” because the article contained words and phrases such as “sexual” and “breast-feeding.”

Considering students in high school are on the cusp of adulthood, legally and otherwise, the attempts to censor them when they engage in debates that are occurring on a daily basis on television and in the newspapers isn’t simply obnoxious; it threatens the integrity of society as well. If students are being taught to self-censor, they will be ineffective citizens. Contrary to basic American principles, namely that all people should be allowed to speak their minds as they see fit, they will internalize ideas.

In fact, according to the Knight Foundation, students who are taught about the value of the First Amendment are more likely to agree with statements such as “People should be allowed to

## The End of Childhood in the Era of the Emerging American Police State

Written by John W. Whitehead  
Wednesday, 08 January 2014 09:23

---

express unpopular opinions” and “Newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval.” However, those who’ve not received such instruction seem more doubtful of the value of free speech.

Thus, one can easily see how the zero-tolerance/censorship regime that dominates American public education can easily translate into a disaster for civil society at large in the coming years.

We’ve chosen to terminate natural childhood development in favor of strict adherence to authority, and to mute unique, interesting, and valid viewpoints in favor of maintaining the status quo. Worse than this, however, is the fact that we’re setting ourselves up for the complete destruction of our democratic society and our democratic institutions in favor of an authoritarian bureaucratic apparatus that manages a population of automatons, unable to think for themselves.

Call it the end of childhood, call it the end of innocence, call it the end of imagination. What it will eventually amount to is the termination of freedom in the United States.

*Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of the Rutherford Institute ( [Rutherford.org](http://Rutherford.org) ) and editor of [GadflyOnline.com](http://GadflyOnline.com) . His latest book, *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, is available online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) . He can be reached at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org)*