

# Epilogue

by John Taylor Gatto



## *Epilogue of The Underground History of American Public Education*

*Only one nation refused to accept the psychology of submission. The Chechens never sought to please, to ingratiate themselves with the bosses; their attitude was always haughty and indeed openly hostile.... And here is the extraordinary thing — everyone was afraid of them. No one could stop them from living as they did. The regime which had ruled the land for thirty years could not force them to respect its laws.*

~ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

*The history of the Hmong yields several lessons that anyone who deals with them might do well to remember. Among the most obvious are that the Hmong do not like to take orders; that they do not like to lose; that they would rather flee, fight, or die than surrender; that they are not intimidated by being outnumbered, that they are rarely persuaded that the customs of other cultures, even those more powerful than their own are superior; that they are capable of getting very angry.... Those who have tried to defeat, deceive, govern, regulate, constrain, assimilate, or patronize the Hmong have, as a rule, disliked them intensely.*

~ Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

*If they mean to have a war, let it begin here*

~ Captain John Parker, commanding the American militia against the British. Said at first light, Lexington, Massachusetts, April 19, 1775

I see two ghosts appear out of the mist on the morning river that runs into our green future; each wraith beckons me follow him down a different path. One I recognize by his arrogant bearing as the imperial spirit of Major General Edward Braddock calling all of us to follow him to the end of history just across the river.

Braddock is a bold man, proud, indifferent to fear. He scorns danger because to him, all answers are already known; he demands to be our shepherd on this last regression to the royal destiny we escaped three lifetimes ago. If we go with him, the whole world will follow, and the British empire reconnected will be invincible. Come home, says Braddock, you are children who cannot care for yourselves properly. We shall

give you a secure place in the bell-curve pyramid of State. Together we shall witness the final evolution of the favored races, though many will be unable to participate in the triumph. Still, there will be for them the satisfaction of serving the fortunate who have inherited the earth at the end of history.

The other ghost is a familiar one, too. A tall, muscular Virginian, just as compelling as Braddock but without his haughtiness, a man dressed in the browns and greens of nature, a brace of pistols at his waist, on a horse he calls Blueskin. He stands straight as an arrow. His powerful presence in combination with the delicate feet of a dancer mark him unmistakably as Major George Washington.

As a boy he learned the hard things: duty, piety, courage, self-reliance, to have a mind of his own, to refuse to accept the psychology of submission. His head was stocked with Cato, Fielding, Euclid, Newton, surveying, Caesar, Tacitus, the Testaments, horsemanship, dancing, how to tell a bawdy joke, how to comfort the weak, how to brace the strong, how to endure hardship, how to give men a reason to die, or one to live.

Once this same colonial frontiersman rode in a dream together with the English general, across an angry green river they rode into the deeps of the further forest. Braddock and his army died on the Monongahela that day, but this American lived because he had learned to think for himself. The men who followed Washington lived, too, because the leader they chose was not a function of some greater abstraction. The loyalty they gave him was freely given, not imposed by intimidation or trickery.

Washington's greatest mistake in judgment, I think, was remembering Braddock's army as the most brilliant thing his eyes had ever seen, for surely that must have been his own reflection in the mirror. In that first moment after he refused to become King George I of America, brilliance never lived inside a more brilliant human vehicle. Behind the heroic persona of Washington a real hero reposed. America is his legacy to us. Because of Washington we owe nothing to empires, not even to the one building in America today which seeks a reunion with Great Britain in order to dominate world affairs. The American people owe empires the same rude salute we gave Britain's at Bunker Hill, Saratoga, and Yorktown.

John Pike, a defense analyst with [globalsecurity.org](http://globalsecurity.org), a policy think tank based in Alexandria, Virginia was quoted on this maker of empires in the *Los Angeles Times*. After noting the Pentagon's new expansions into Central Asia and Eastern Europe, he remarked that the United States military now spans the planet in a way unprecedented in history. "If you want to talk about suns never setting on empires,

you know, the Brits had nothing compared to this," said Pike.

Time to take our schools back. If they mean to have a war, let it begin now.

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