

Colin Gunn & Joaquin Fernandez Present

INDOCTRINATION

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY

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We dedicate this book to our dear wives, the co-educators of our children, Monica Fernandez, Emily Gunn, and Sarah LaVerdiere: thank you for your love, patience, and wise counsel; you are truly precious gifts from the Lord and your worth is indeed far above rubies

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FILMMAKERS' NOTES

The Big Yellow School Bus

Colin Gunn



“In my mind, there is no better emblem of this madness than the big yellow school bus. That is why it played the part of the antagonist in our film.”

COLIN GUNN

Colin Gunn is an award-winning writer/director/producer and accomplished animator. His early documentary films include *Shaky Town* and *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*. His most recent films are *IndoctrinNation* and *Captivated*. He was also executive producer of *Act Like Men*. As an actor, Mr. Gunn played Wally the Mailman in the award-winning feature film *The Widow's Might*, which premiered in U.S. theaters in April, 2009. Originally from Hamilton, Scotland, Mr. Gunn lives in Waco, Texas, with his wife and eight children.

The Bible says, “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matt. 18:16). That’s simply what documentaries do. They bring forth evidence and establish truth by presenting an audience with a collection of witnesses. The power of documentaries often lies in bringing the experiences of others to an audience that might not be readily persuaded by a book or sermon.

It’s always the eyewitnesses to an event that can present the most powerful testimony — there’s something about looking into someone’s eyes and hearing their story. In the film *IndoctrinNation*, and in this companion book, you’ll see how persuasive those testimonies can be, and how moving and meaningful it is to hear firsthand stories of Christian educators working in the government schools.

I could try to explain to you the conflict of being a Christian teacher in a public school, but Christian teacher Sarah LaVerdiere can make that argument with power and authenticity. She was the

teacher that everyone wanted for their child. She loved the kids, and the kids loved her, yet her damning indictment of the schools is made with irrefutable honesty.

Likewise, Mike Metarko capably stands up against the “salt and light” argument, offering little hope to the parents who argue that their child will be that successful missionary to the schools. If an elementary school principal had little success, what hope has little Johnny?

Both Sarah and Mike lived their story. What they say is authentic, and the audience knows it. After all, they sacrificed their careers to deliver their message to you!

Again, I could express to you my opinion that parents are accountable for the spiritual and physical risk their children face in the public schools. That’s my opinion, and you could take it or leave it. But when you hear the testimony of Brian Rohrbough, there’s no debate. Brian lost his son in the Columbine shooting, and he leaves every parent with the unforgettable words, “I put him there.” These are some of the bravest words I have ever heard.

There are many other eyewitnesses in this book who will detail to you the decline of American public education from the inside. From R.C. Murray, who exposes the dumbing down of the curriculum, to Karl Priest, who participated in a textbook war and documents the futile thirty-year struggle to reform the schools in West Virginia. Then we have Robert Ziegler, who powerfully testifies to his ultimate offense in the public schools — naming the name of Christ!

Like any good trial, we also need our expert witnesses. I often have to remind people while fielding questions about the film that I’m not the expert. Our job as documentarians is to find those experts and interview them. And what an honor it is for us! Many of these men, such as Samuel Blumenfeld, Howard Phillips, and E. Ray Moore, are the founding fathers of the present-day homeschooling movement and are longtime defenders of the liberties that homeschoolers like me now enjoy.

Then let us bring you John Taylor Gatto, the author of *The Underground History of American Education*. As Teacher of the Year in New York City and New York State, he now stands as both an expert and eyewitness chronicling the disaster that is the public school system.

Mr. Gatto's memorable quote in our film sums it all up for me. He says, "Is there an idea more radical in the history of the human race than turning your children over to total strangers whom you know nothing about, and having those strangers work on your child's mind, out of your sight, for a period of twelve years? . . . It's a mad idea!"

Indeed it is. Public schooling is unnatural, it's weird, it's outdated. It's based on a model that is neither American (it was imported from Prussia), nor Christian (it was founded by Unitarians, progressives, and utopians).

In my mind, there is no better emblem of this madness than the big yellow school bus. That is why it played the part of the antagonist in our film. As an outsider, these clunky, noisy, polluting monsters stand out as uniquely American symbols of federal uniformity and statism. The bus is loaded with every anti-Christian ideology from utopians like Robert Owen and Karl Marx, to the evolutionist Charles Darwin, to the psychologist Edward Thorndike and the humanist John Dewey. Using the bus is not a neutral act, but a decision that opens a child to multiple ideologies that oppose the Christian faith.

In presenting this book as an accompaniment to our film, one of our objectives is to equip the homeschooling public with the ammunition necessary to effectively defend our educational choices and attack our adversaries' choices. In the pro-life movement, sidewalk counseling has been successful where political action has been less than effective. Now is the time for us to be as bold in the same manner, using these resources to graciously challenge our brothers and sisters who are still deceived by the public school system. No one finds it easy to broach this subject with friends or family. So maybe you can let this book or film be the grenade you throw in the room and leave! We'll take the flak for you.

Please remember, this is the time to be bold. For those with children in the government schools this might be a matter of life or death.

FILMMAKERS' NOTES

Filmmaking with Fear & Trembling

Joaquin Fernandez



“In a very real sense, filmmakers are teachers, and when our films include a rebuke for the bride of Christ, we should consider well how we admonish the brethren.”

JOAQUIN FERNANDEZ

Joaquin Fernandez is an award-winning writer, producer, and director of documentaries, television commercials and educational and marketing videos. He has shot extensively in the United States and has filmed on location in the Caribbean, France, Italy, Portugal, Israel, Russia, Japan, and the Philippines. *IndoctriNation* is his first feature-length film, on which he was also director of photography and editor. Mr. Fernandez is president of The Lighthouse, a video production and graphic design firm in Wake Forest, North Carolina, where he lives with his wife and four children.

In his book *Millstones and Stumbling Blocks*, Bradley Heath writes:

[R]emoving scales from the eyes requires touching the eyeballs, always an uncomfortable proposition. Although the goal is better vision, the process may feel like a poke in the eye; the natural reaction is to close one’s eyes and turn away.¹

IndoctriNation was a challenging project for this very reason. It addresses an extremely sensitive issue for both families and churches — how we ought to train up and educate our children in a way that is pleasing to the Lord — and we knew that in order for this “poke in the eye” to be well received, we had to not only deliver the right message, but also do it with the right heart.

As Christian homeschooling parents, we wanted our film to

share our objections to the public schools' methodology and subject matter, and also to convey our clear desire that Christian parents remove their children from these schools for the sake of Christ's Kingdom. We wanted to share our deepest convictions about what God's Word has to say in the area of educating our children.

We began by writing a basic outline of some of the things we wanted to say and how we wanted to say them. We compiled a list of the people we wanted to interview on our *IndoctriNation* Tour where we would take a big yellow school bus, which we didn't even have yet, all around the country. We raised support from friends and ministries, got the word out at events and online, and began shooting footage at conferences. But then we began compiling all the material, *and our knees started shaking*.

You see, the Lord Jesus loves His Bride. He gave His life for her. Her enemies are His enemies. And one day He will say "Bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). This should strike fear in the hearts of all unbelievers, but it should also give great pause to those who have anything negative to say to or about the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's no wonder the Apostle James said "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1).

In a very real sense, filmmakers are teachers, and when our films include a rebuke for the Bride of Christ, we should consider well how we admonish the brethren. But it is equally true that we all are responsible for what we do with what the Lord has revealed to us. As it is written in the Book of Proverbs:

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? (Prov. 24:11-12).

Most of us who are involved in the *IndoctriNation* project are deeply committed to home education. We have been blessed with a vision for multi-generational faithfulness, humbly seeking to apply God's Word to every area of life including the training of our children. But with

this understanding comes responsibility. Will we not have to give an account to Him who weighs the hearts, as to whether we did our part in trying to deliver an entire generation stumbling into public school classrooms all across our land?

Our film has been received by homeschoolers and public schoolers in a way that has far exceeded our expectations. We have received letter upon letter from both parents and teachers who are getting out of the system and turning to God's Word alone as their guide. In this way God has blessed this film, and we are so thankful to Him for the way He has allowed it to impact the lives of so many.

My prayer is that the Lord would now use you, your friends, and your church leaders — equipped with this book and our film — to blow the trumpet, as it were, and call God's people to seriously consider their ways regarding the training of their children. There is just too much at stake for us to remain silent.

I set watchmen over you, saying, "Listen to the sound of the trumpet!" But they said, "We will not listen." Therefore hear, you nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people — the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not heeded My words nor My law, but rejected it (Jer. 6:17–19).

Will you sound the alarm with us?

Notes

1. Bradley Heath, *Millstones and Stumbling Blocks: Understanding Education in Post-Christian America* (Tuscon, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2006), p. 12.