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**Your Papers, Please... Tagged Students Defy Big Brother.
Reject Being Forced To Wear Social Security Numbers**

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David M. Bresnahan

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<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps1/CERU/Articles/CERU-9909-98-OWI.doc>

RUSTON, Louisiana -- Hundreds of students in this little town don't want to wear their Social Security numbers around their necks for all to see. Their school administrators have ignored their complaints even though their numbers are growing.

When the school year began a few weeks ago, the students at Ruston High School, like many students across the nation, were required to wear an ID badge as part of added security precautions. The badges in Ruston include each student's Social Security number, a violation of federal law according to two students.

The badges are worn on a lanyard with the Pepsi logo on it. The badge has a photo of the student, the school name, the student's name, and a barcode which represents the Social Security number. Although administrators claim the number is protected from unauthorized use through encryption in the barcode, the students know that is not true.

To prove how easy it is to read the barcodes, Jonathan Washington, 16, reads any barcode in about 15 seconds. He tells other students their Social Security number and then asks them to sign his petition to have the cards changed.

His methods are convincing. Over 350 students have signed in just the first few days. Rachel Winchel, 16, another Ruston student, is helping to spread the protest and circulate the petition.

"We just aren't taught code 39 barcode encryption in school. It's just another system that is easily learned. It's not that hard," explained Washington to WorldNetDaily. He has created an [Internet web page to teach others how to read the cards](#).

Washington and Winchel are also concerned that a student from the school did the work to enter all the Social Security numbers into the computer that was used to make the cards. They said little or no security was used to protect the numbers from unauthorized use.

"Parents should have some concern because their children's Social Security numbers are linked directly to theirs in all financial records. If you have a child's you can get the parents'. It's a financial jeopardy to just about everyone in school," complained Washington.

He said his concern is a philosophical one, not religious. Winchel is of a different opinion.

"I have religious and moral convictions behind what they're doing as it being wrong. It's totally appalling," she said in a phone interview.

"I'm a person that's made by God and I'm not a number. I'm more special than that. I do believe that it's religiously wrong. I don't want to be branded and labeled as livestock. We're more special than that," said Winchel.

Washington is opposed to ID cards in general and does not want his Social Security number displayed for all to see, nor does he want it to be in school computers. His parents are seeking legal counsel and have not ruled out a lawsuit.

The parents of both Washington and Winchel expressed complete support for what their children are doing.

Dr. Charles Scriber is principal of the school. Although he met with Washington and his parents, he has ignored a written complaint from Winchel and her mother. He has not granted a written request for an appointment to discuss her concerns.

In an [interview with WorldNetDaily](#) he defended the practice and claims the cards are legal. He said he has no plans to change the cards.

Since the faculty and administration also wear the cards, students are busy taking down their Social Security numbers with plans to publish the results on the Internet if the cards are not discontinued.

"Actually, it's not difficult to look at it and know what it means," explained Winchel. "There's narrow bars and there's wide bars. Each number zero through nine has a code. By memorizing the code for the number zero through nine, you can just glance at someone's card and the numbers just pop out.

"Many kids at school can do it, and it doesn't take very long to even learn. That's why it concerned me because it's very easy to learn," she explained.

Winchel and Washington have cut the barcode from their cards. Amanda Winchel, Rachel's younger sister, changed her card. She painted over the barcode then created a new one which represents the number 911.

Winchel and Washington have now stopped wearing their cards, but they have not been disciplined for doing so. Their actions could lead to expulsion from school, but that is a risk they are willing to take to stand up for what they believe is right.

[The Ruston High School Student Handbook detail the rules regarding the cards and spells out the possible penalties for infractions.](#)

Washington's complaints to Dr. Scriber produced a sudden change in policy in the past few days. The librarian was told to remove Washington's Social Security number from the library computer which reads the barcodes. A new card has not been issued, and the cafeteria computer has not been changed.

"He thought that would get me to leave him alone about it," said Washington, who has vowed to continue his fight. He will not be satisfied until the cards are completely changed for all students. If the change is not made he expects to take the school to court for civil damages.

The school has always had an ID card, but past cards were much different. They did not contain a Social Security number, nor were they worn. Students were only required to present the card when requested to do so.

The new policy was instituted in response to the numerous shootings at schools around the country. Many schools now require ID cards to be worn as a security measure.

Winchel and Washington both claim the ID badge will not stop a potential killer.

"If anything, they are just good identification for when you get shot at school so your parents can come and see your ID badge when your body is mutilated. I don't see how this would effect security in any way at all," exclaimed Winchel.

"It would not prevent a school shooting at all. The ID badge does not change the mindset of the killers," she added.

She also pointed out that the shootings at many schools have been by students who would be wearing a badge if their school had the same policy.

Winchel would object to the card even if the barcode and Social Security number are no longer displayed. She does not want her Social Security number to even be in the school computer system.

"I'm not wearing mine because I'm tired of all of this nonsense," she said. "I shouldn't have to wear it. I'm a student. I shouldn't be treated as if I'm a felon. I have done

nothing wrong. I am not going to wear my ID badge any longer at school. It's not necessary or relevant to get an education."

Although teachers are required to report a student without a badge, Washington and Winchel have not had any action taken against them for their defiance. Winchel says at least 350 of the approximately 1,200 students have signed their petition. She believes more would sign if it were not for the intimidating announcements made over the school loud speakers each morning.

Students are warned not to deface the cards or to be in school without them. Disciplinary action on a school record could prevent college acceptance in later years, so Winchel says many students are hesitant to be supportive.

"Honestly, they are very scared to do anything, and I don't blame them. When you have the school telling you that you're going to get detention or suspension for not wearing your ID badge. While they support this they don't want to be suspended either," she explained.

Both Winchel and Washington plan to meet with the school board if the principal fails to resolve the situation.

The petition signed by the students states: "The students of Ruston High who have signed below realize that the barcode on each student's ID badge is that student's Social Security number. They also realize that their Social Security number may not be used in this manner and request that they be assigned a generic number as a barcode."